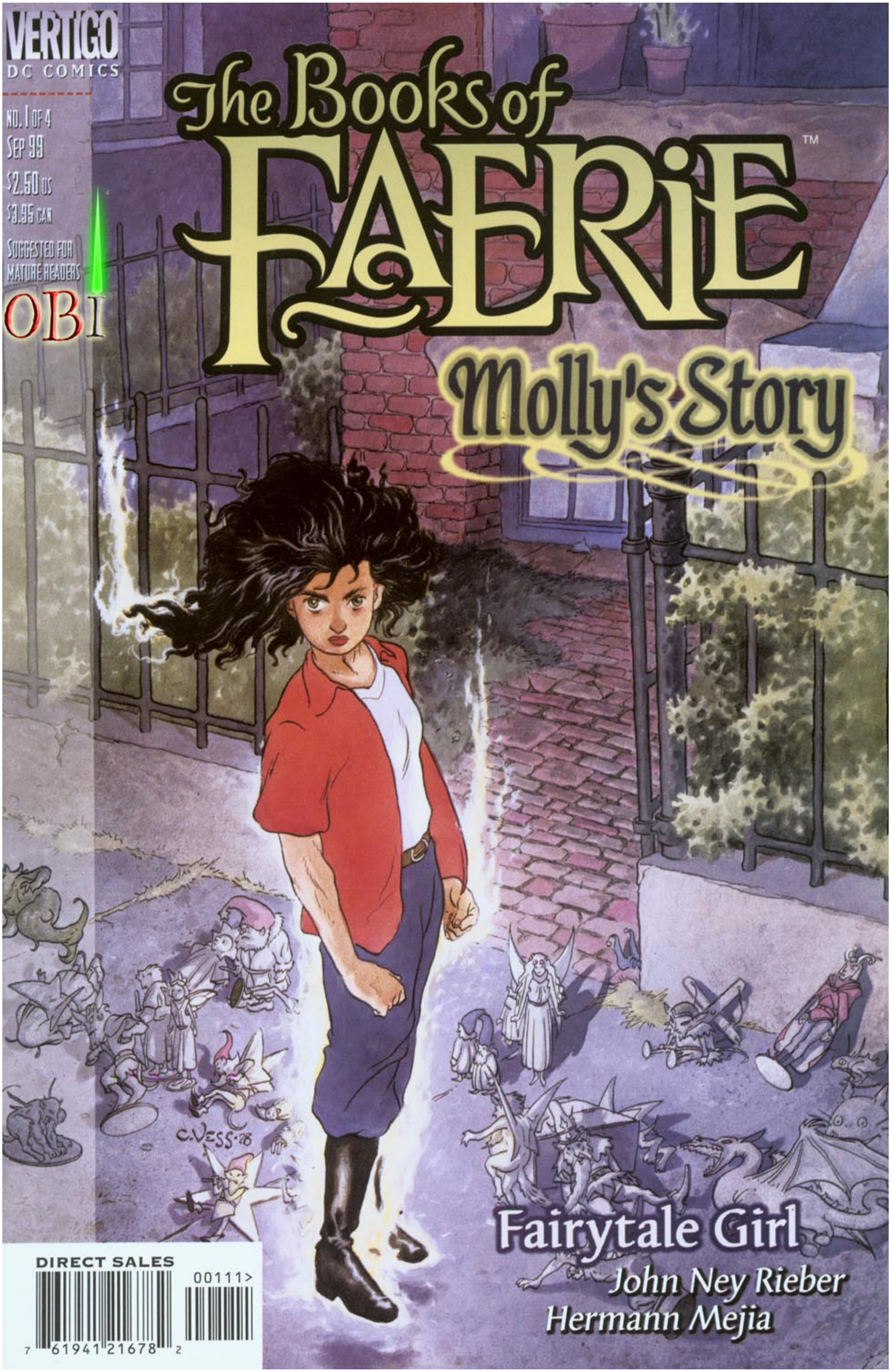
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Molly's Story
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The Books of FAERIE
Molly's Story

Book 1: TWILIGHT

John Ney Rieber - story
Hermann Mejia - art
Alex Sinclair - colors & separations
Comicraft - letters
Charles Vess - cover
Cliff Chiang - assistant editor
Stuart Moore - editor

MOLLY O'REILLY created by JOHN NEY RIEBER and PETER SNEJBJERG.

◆

"THE BARDS WILL SING OF IT, MOLLY O'REILLY...
THE CURSE YOU GET FROM ME."
– Queen Titania of Faerie

Molly wanted nothing of magic...
until her then-boyfriend, Tim Hunter, dragged her into his world.
Cursed by Titania never to touch the ground nor eat Earthly food,
Molly has learned to accept her new condition, but never to like it.

But the Royal House of Faerie does not always stand united...
and Molly's one chance for a new life may rest with Auberon,
King of the Twilight Realm....

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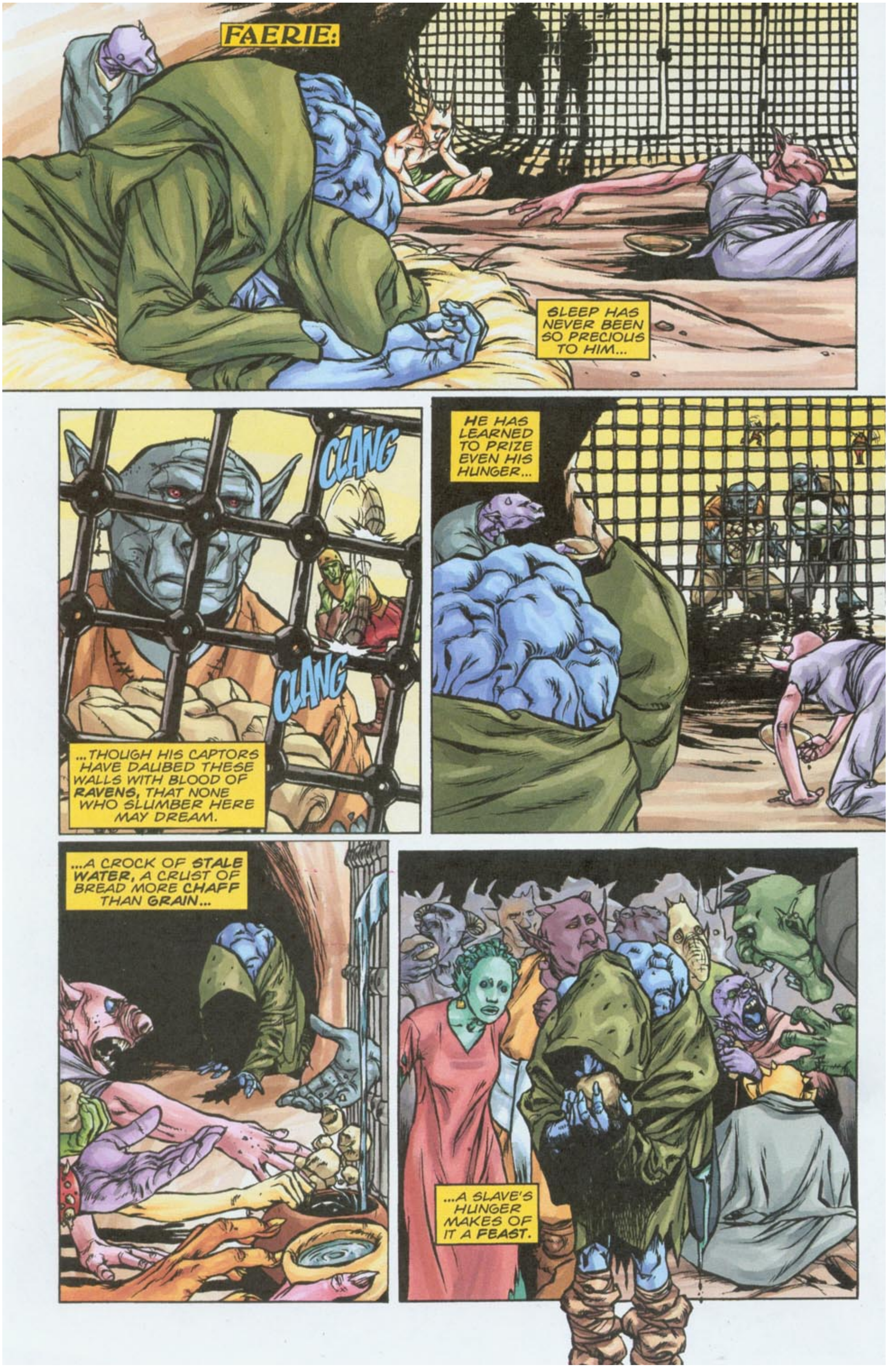
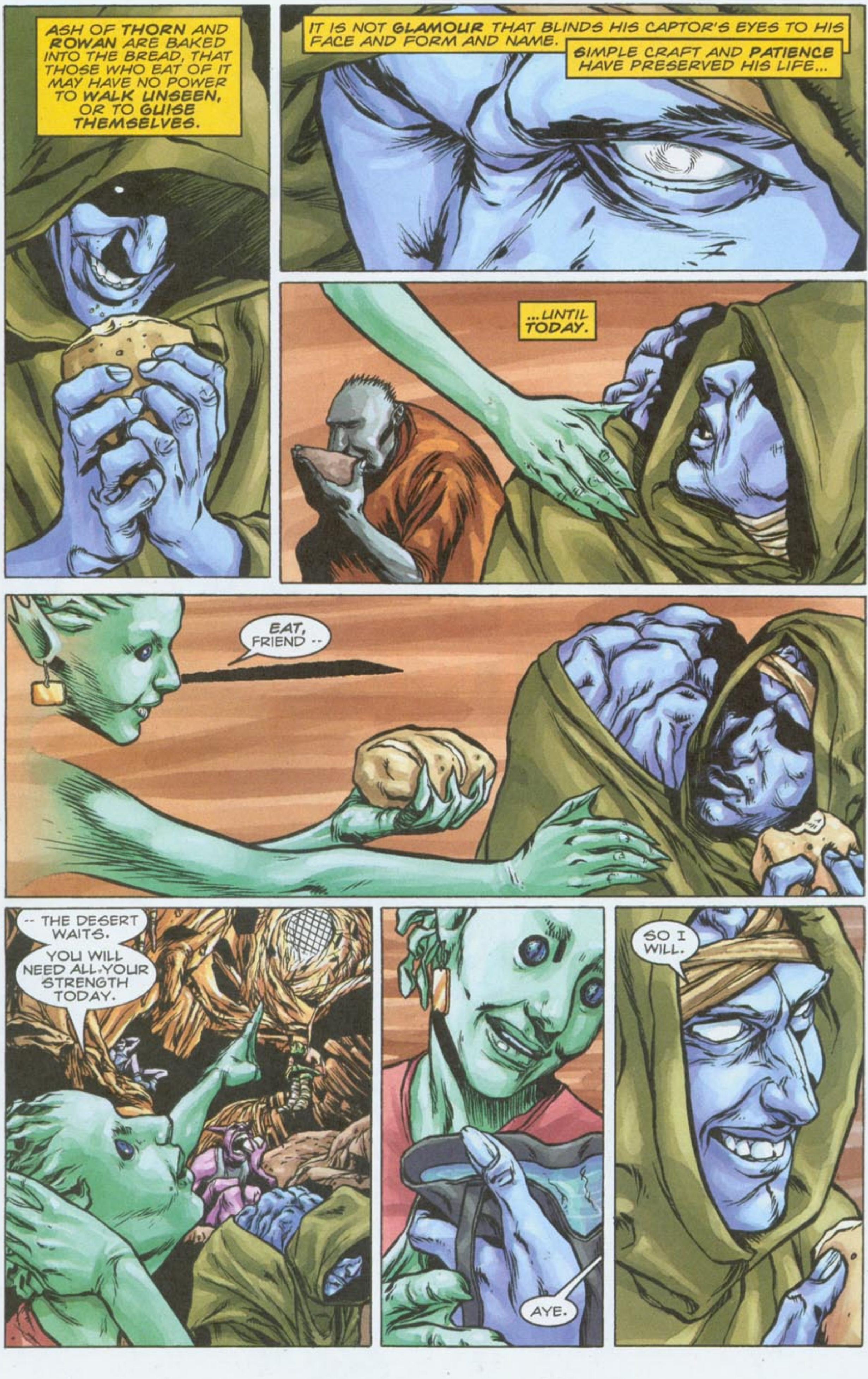
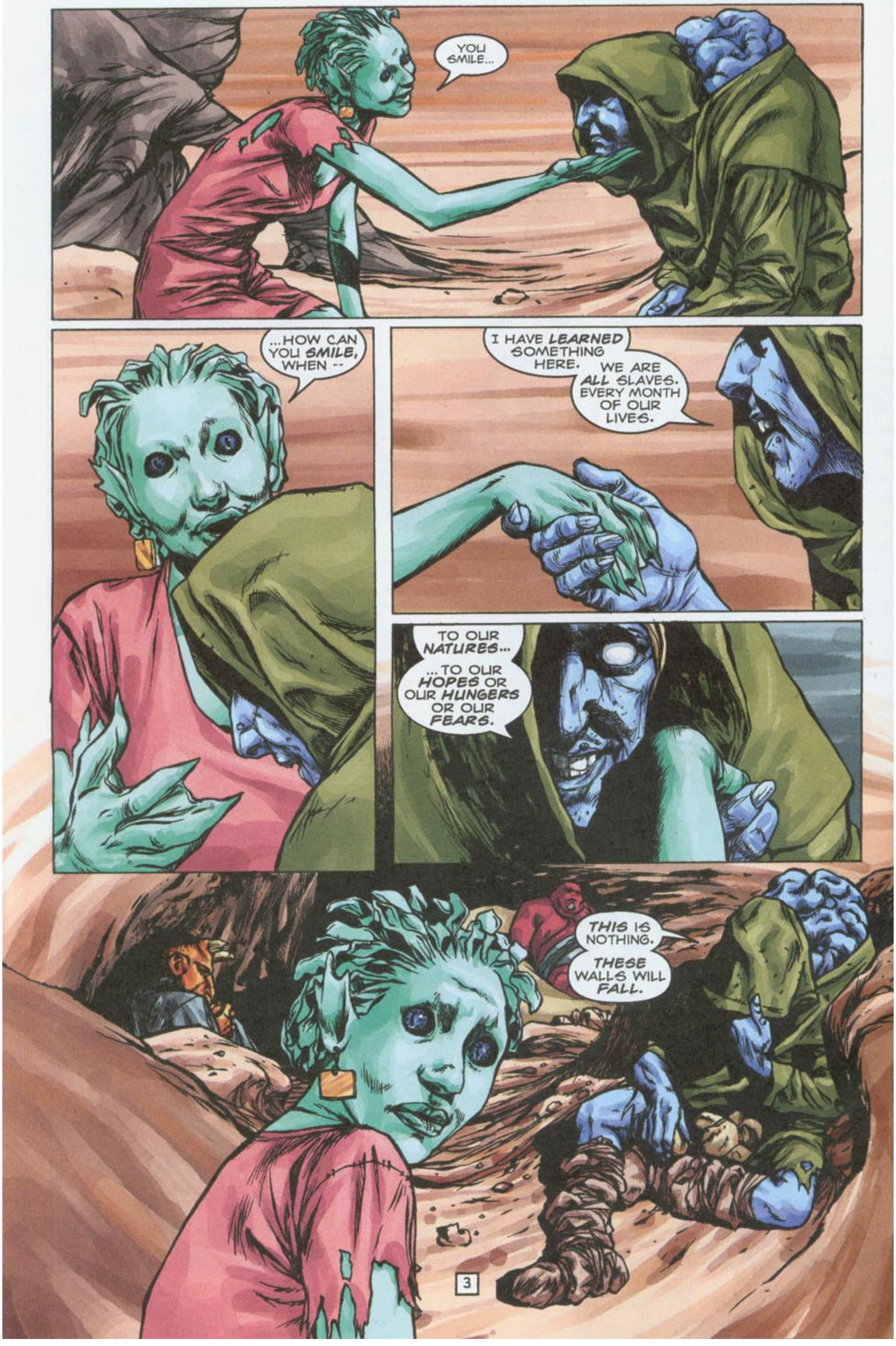
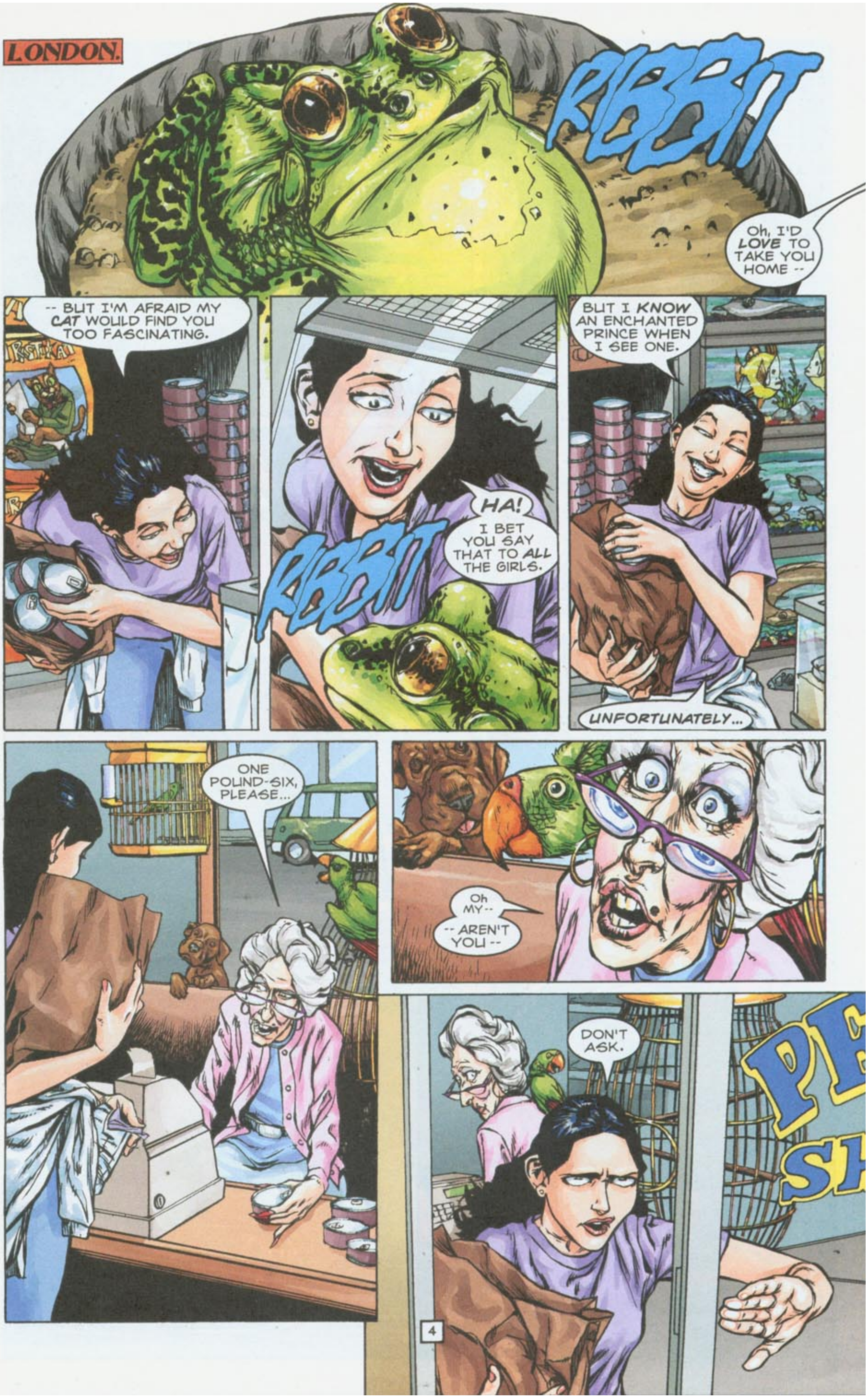
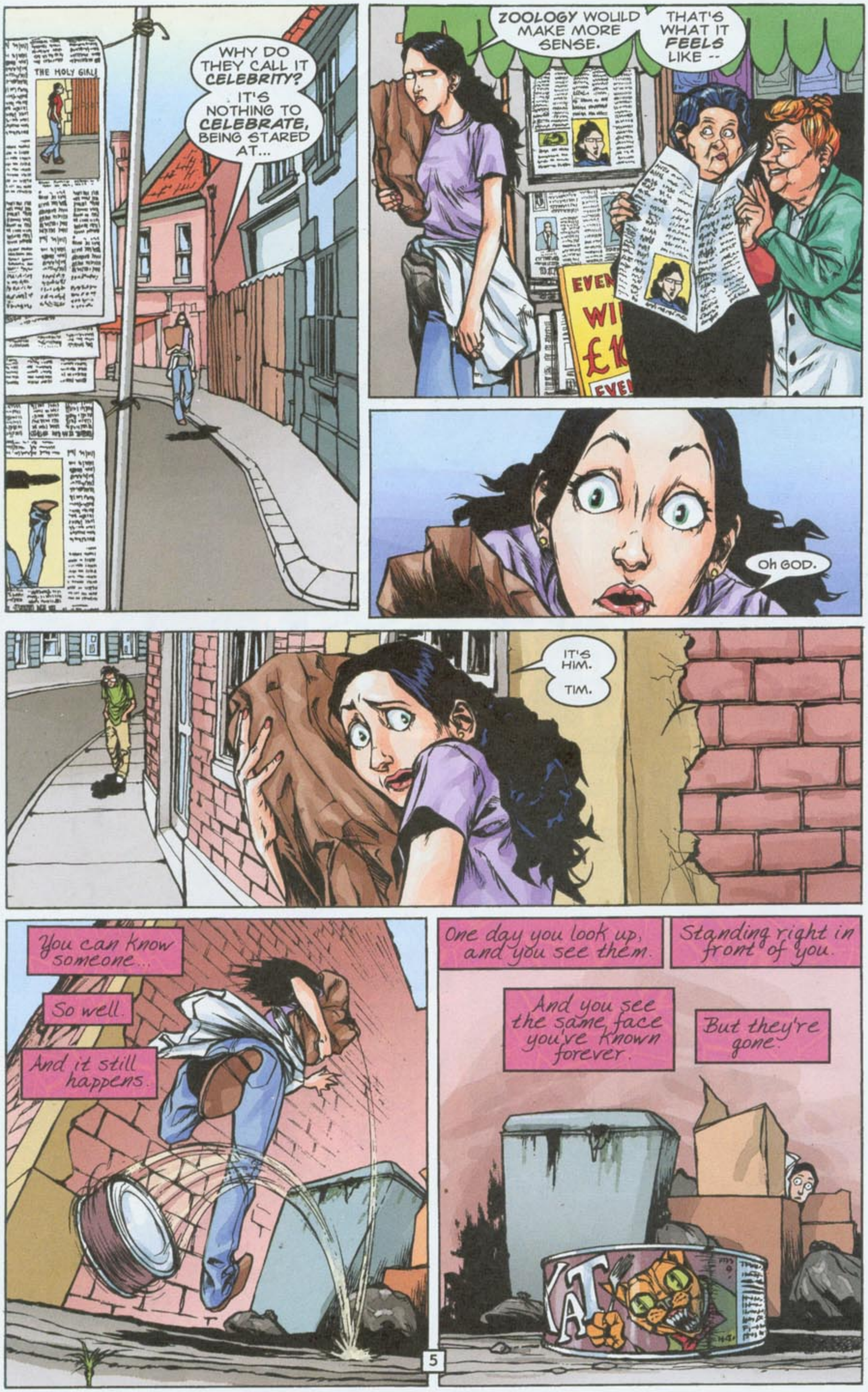
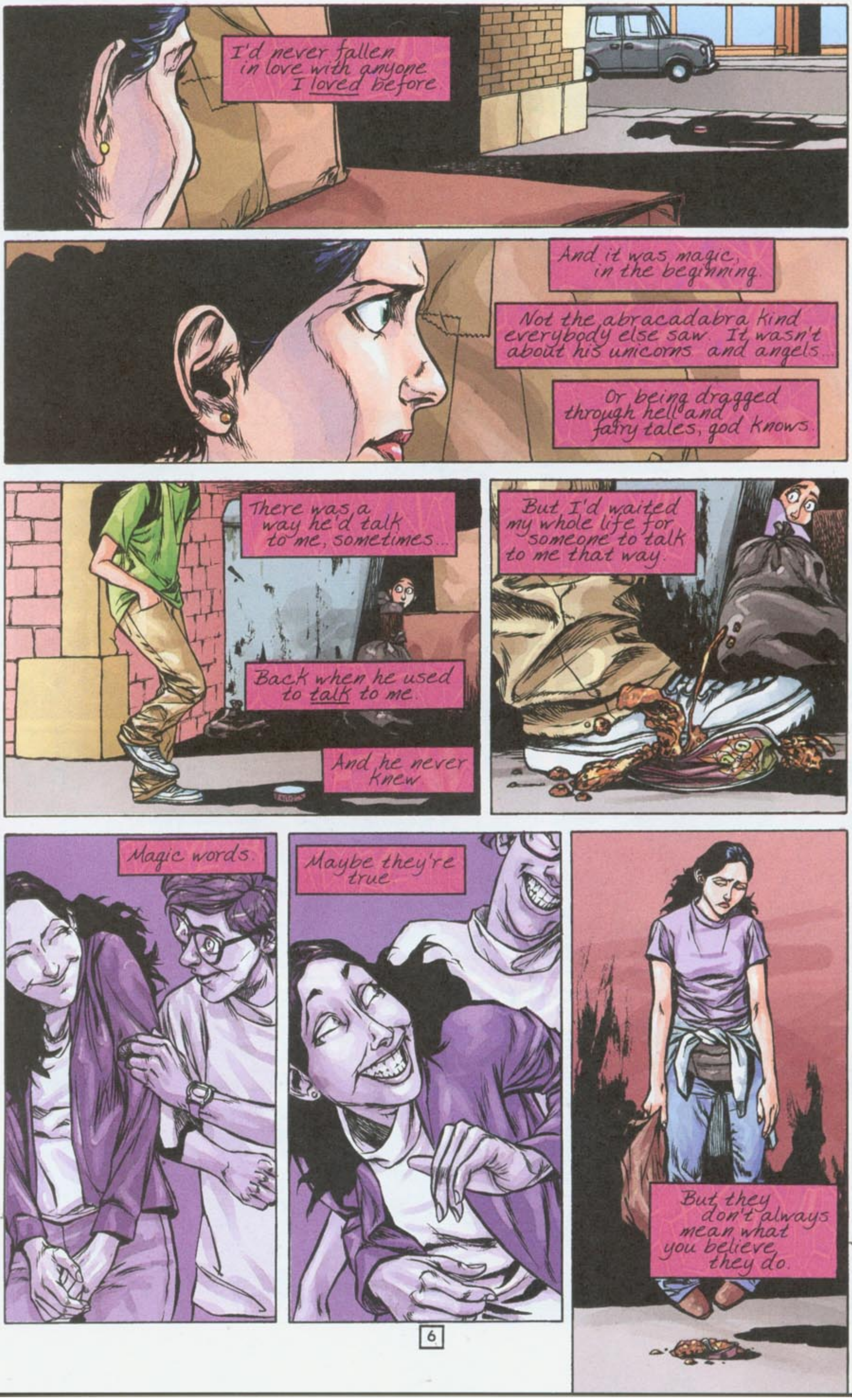

FAERIE:
SLEEP HAS NEVER BEEN SO PRECIOUS TO HIM...
CLANG
CLANG
...THOUGH HIS CAPTORS HAVE DAUBED THESE WALLS WITH BLOOD OF RAVENS, THAT NONE WHO SLUMBER HERE MAY DREAM.
HE HAS LEARNED TO PRIZE EVEN HIS HUNGER...
...A CROCK OF STALE WATER, A CRUST OF BREAD MORE CHAFF THAN GRAIN...
...A SLAVE'S HUNGER MAKES OF IT A FEAST.

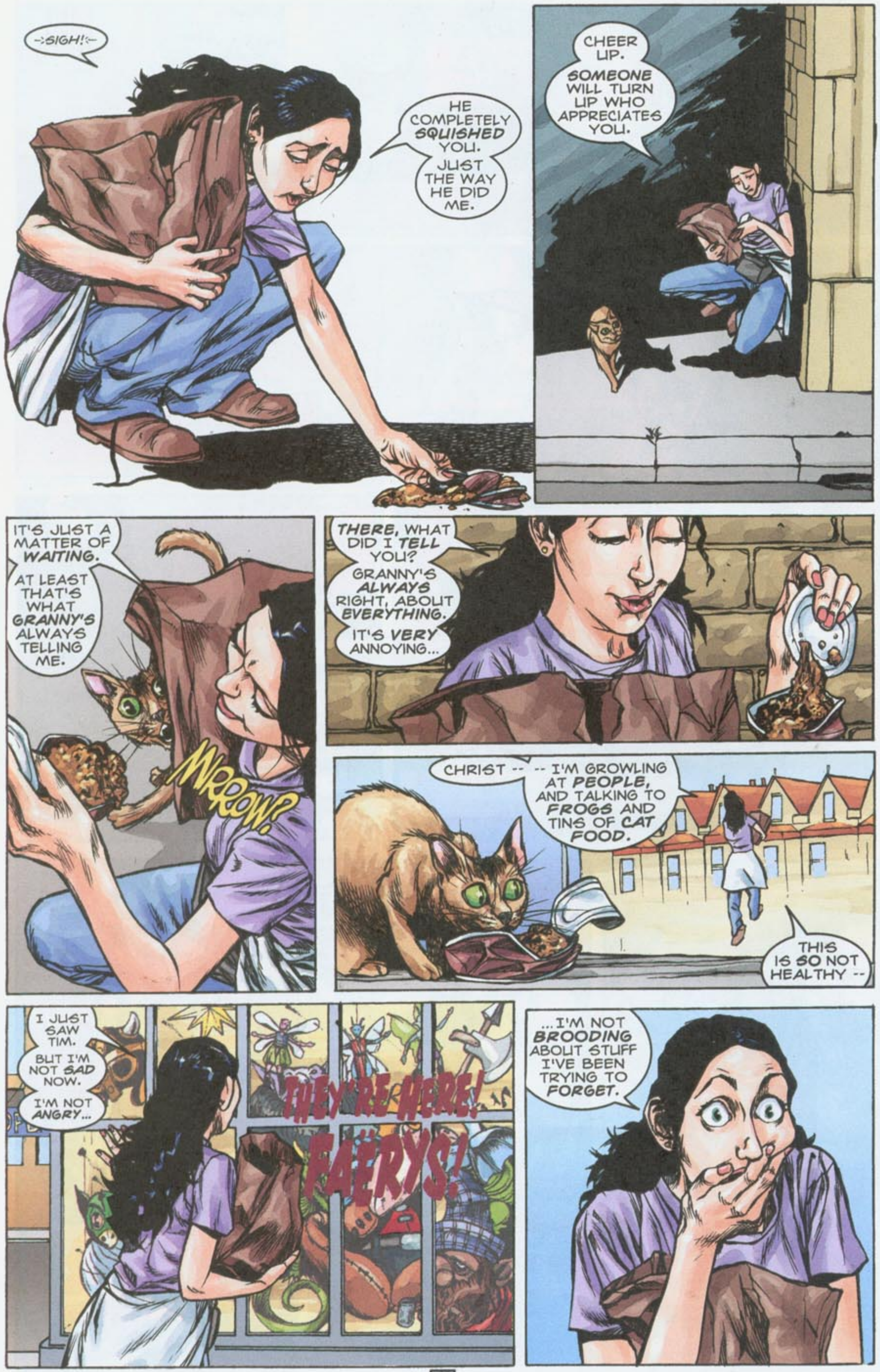

ASH OF THORN AND ROWAN ARE BAKED INTO THE BREAD, THAT THOSE WHO EAT OF IT MAY HAVE NO POWER TO WALK UNSEEN, OR TO GUISE THEMSELVES.
IT IS NOT GLAMOUR THAT BLINDS HIS CAPTOR'S EYES TO HIS FACE AND FORM AND NAME.
SIMPLE CRAFT AND PATIENCE HAVE PRESERVED HIS LIFE...
...UNTIL TODAY.
EAT, FRIEND --
-- THE DESERT WAITS.
YOU WILL NEED ALL YOUR STRENGTH TODAY.
AYE.
SO I WILL.

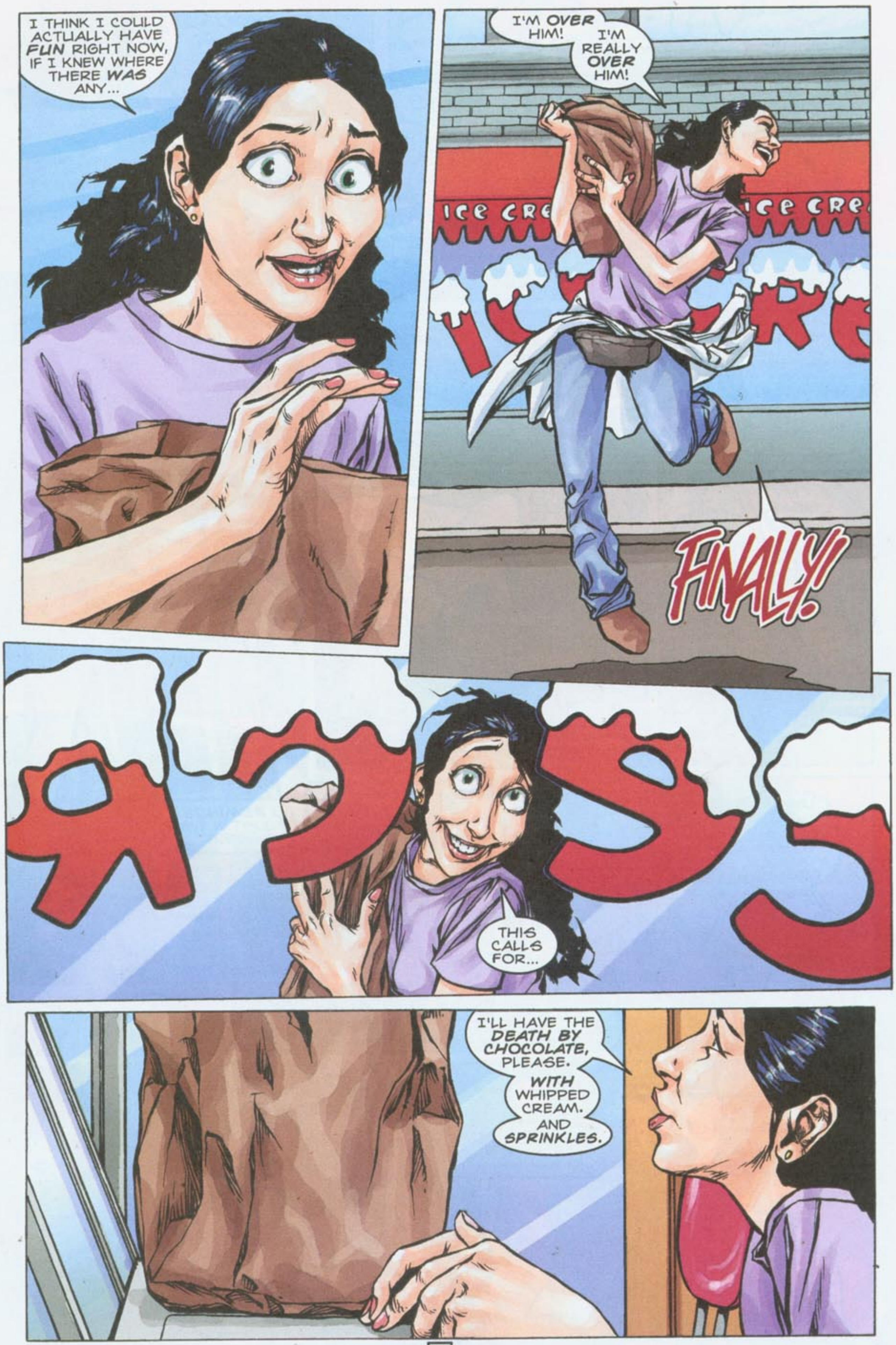

YOU SMILE...
...HOW CAN YOU *SMILE,* WHEN --
I HAVE *LEARNED* SOMETHING HERE.
WE ARE *ALL* SLAVES. EVERY MONTH OF OUR LIVES.
TO OUR *NATURES...*
...TO OUR *HOPES* OR OUR *HUNGERS* OR OUR *FEARS.*
THIS IS NOTHING.
THESE WALLS WILL *FALL.*

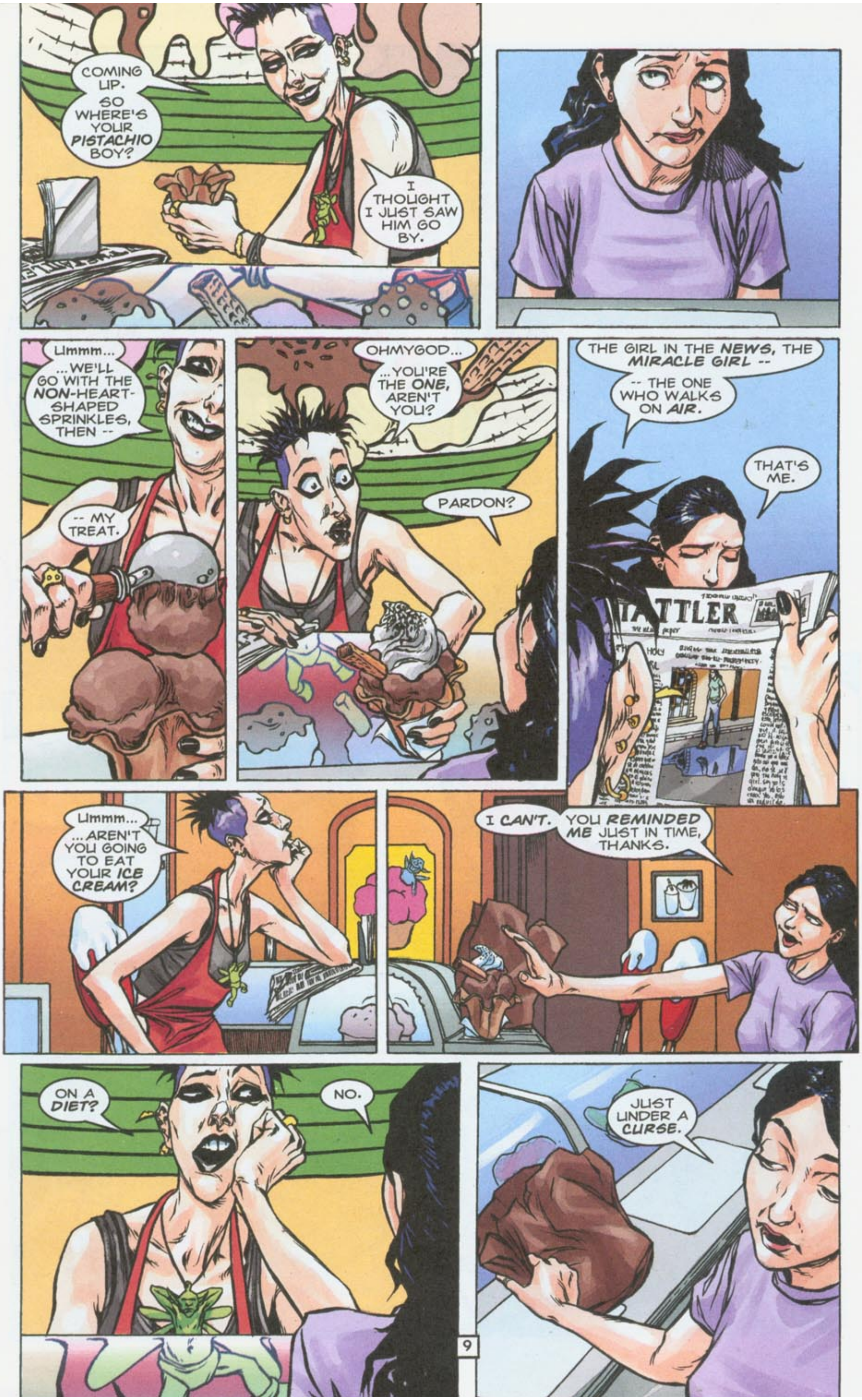

LONDON.
RIBBIT
Oh, I'D LOVE TO TAKE YOU HOME --
-- BUT I'M AFRAID MY CAT WOULD FIND YOU TOO FASCINATING.
RIBBIT
HA! I BET YOU SAY THAT TO ALL THE GIRLS.
BUT I KNOW AN ENCHANTED PRINCE WHEN I SEE ONE.
UNFORTUNATELY...
ONE POUND-SIX, PLEASE...
Oh MY--
-- AREN'T YOU --
DON'T ASK.

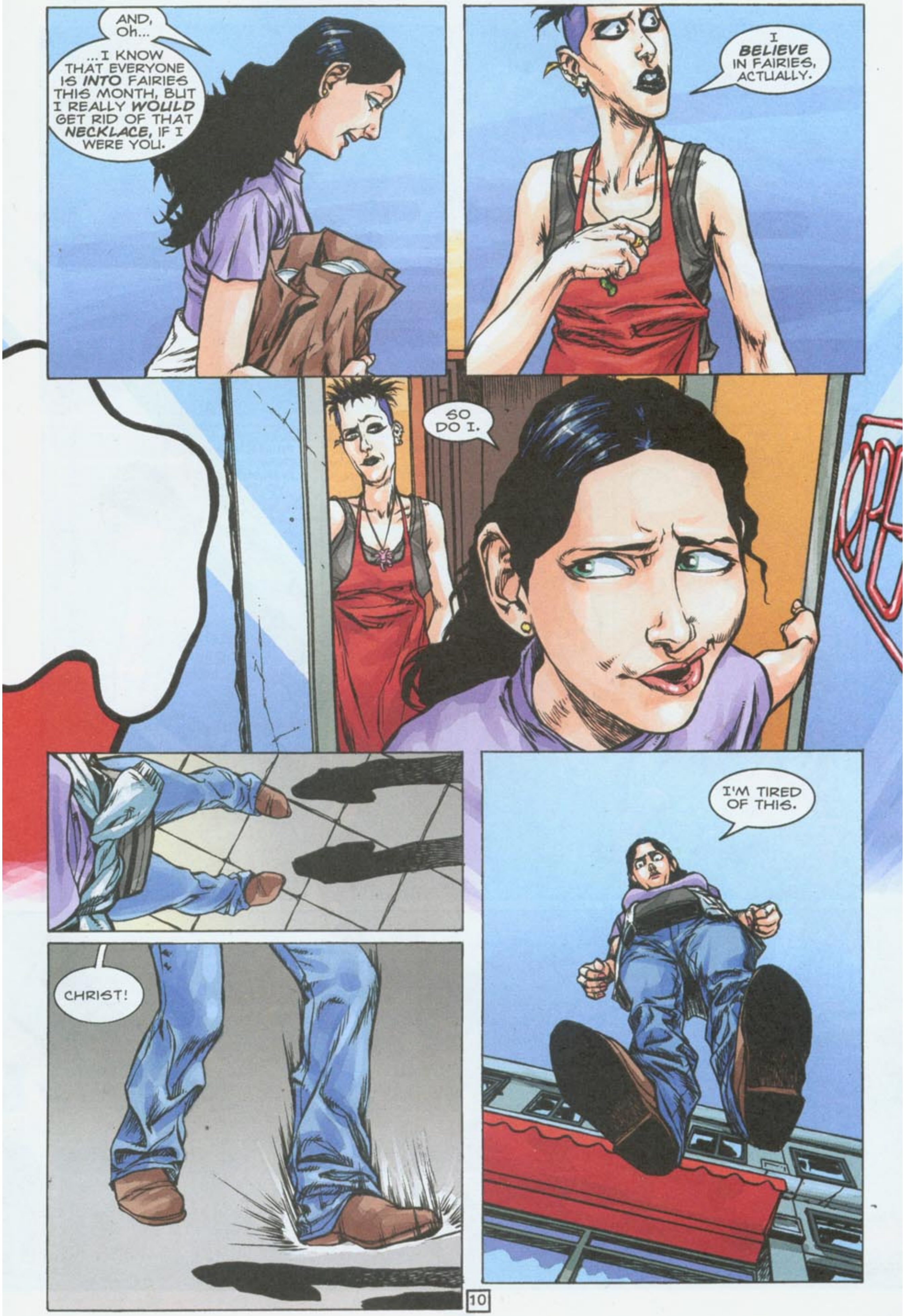

THE HOLY GIRL
WHY DO THEY CALL IT *CELEBRITY*? IT'S NOTHING TO *CELEBRATE*, BEING STARED AT...
ZOOLOGY WOULD MAKE MORE SENSE.
THAT'S WHAT IT *FEELS* LIKE --
EVEN
WI
£1
Oh GOD.
IT'S HIM.
TIM.
You can know someone...
So well.
And it still happens.
One day you look up, and you see them.
Standing right in front of you.
And you see the same face you've known forever.
But they're gone.
KAT

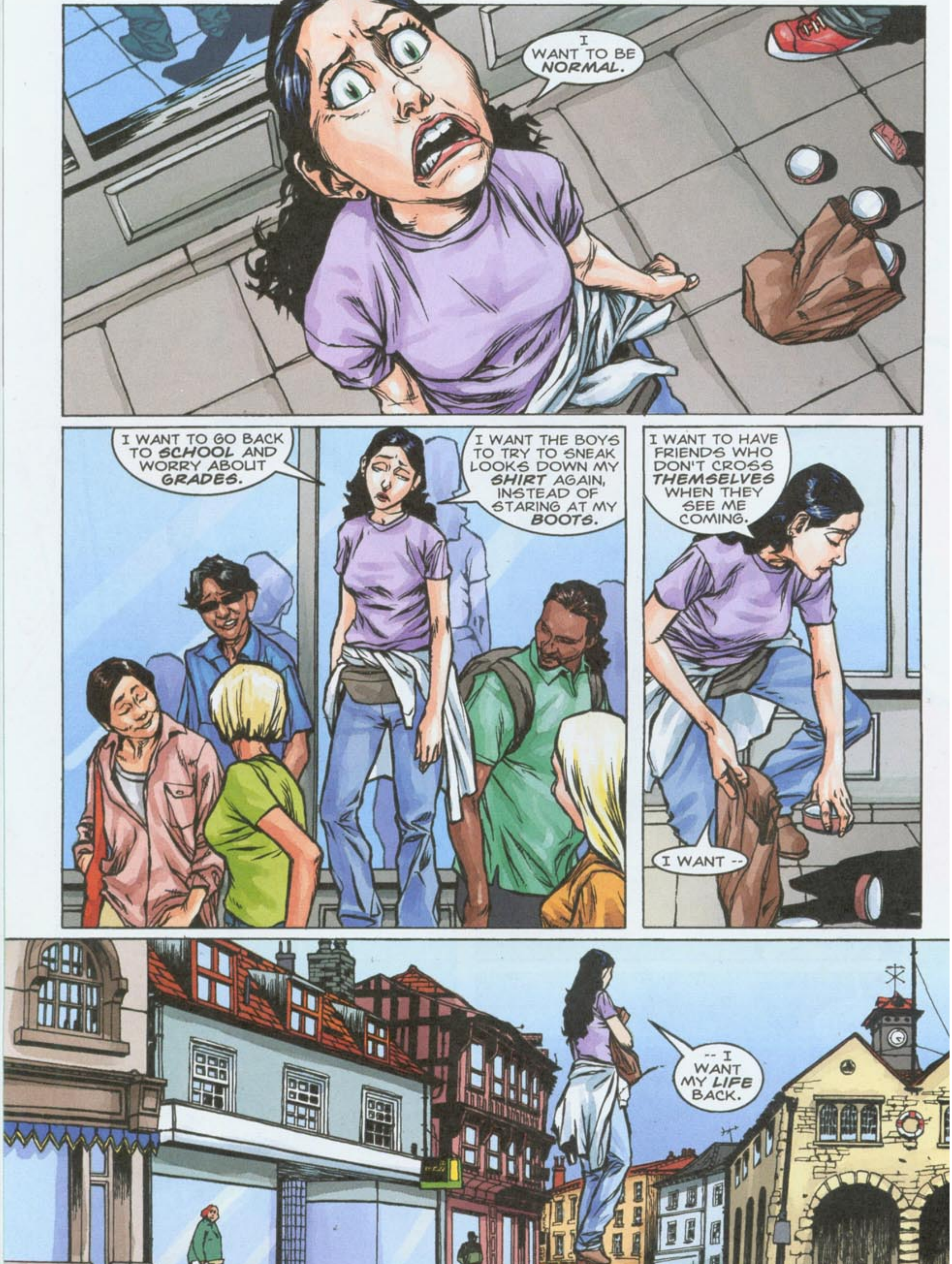

I'd never fallen in love with anyone I loved before.
And it was magic, in the beginning.
Not the abracadabra kind everybody else saw. It wasn't about his unicorns and angels...
Or being dragged through hell and fairy tales, god knows.
There was a way he'd talk to me, sometimes...
Back when he used to talk to me.
And he never knew.
But I'd waited my whole life for someone to talk to me that way.
Magic words.
Maybe they're true.
But they don't always mean what you believe they do.

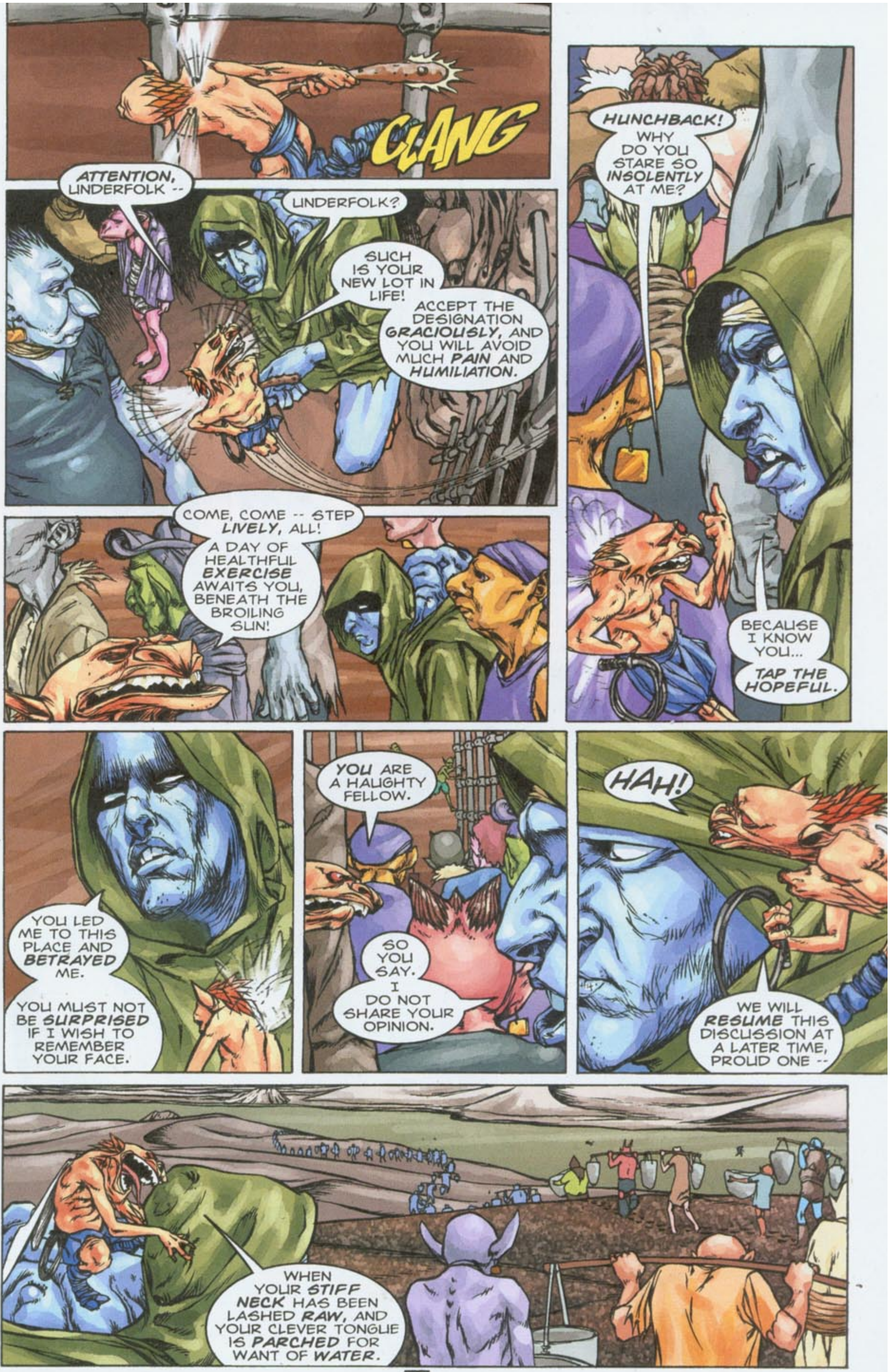

-:SIGH!:-
HE COMPLETELY SQUISHED YOU.
JUST THE WAY HE DID ME.
CHEER UP.
SOMEONE WILL TURN UP WHO APPRECIATES YOU.
IT'S JUST A MATTER OF WAITING.
AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT GRANNY'S ALWAYS TELLING ME.
MRROW?
THERE, WHAT DID I TELL YOU?
GRANNY'S ALWAYS RIGHT, ABOUT EVERYTHING.
IT'S VERY ANNOYING...
CHRIST --
-- I'M GROWLING AT PEOPLE, AND TALKING TO FROGS AND TINS OF CAT FOOD.
THIS IS SO NOT HEALTHY --
I JUST SAW TIM.
BUT I'M NOT SAD NOW.
I'M NOT ANGRY...
THEY'RE HERE! FAERYS!
...I'M NOT BROODING ABOUT STUFF I'VE BEEN TRYING TO FORGET.

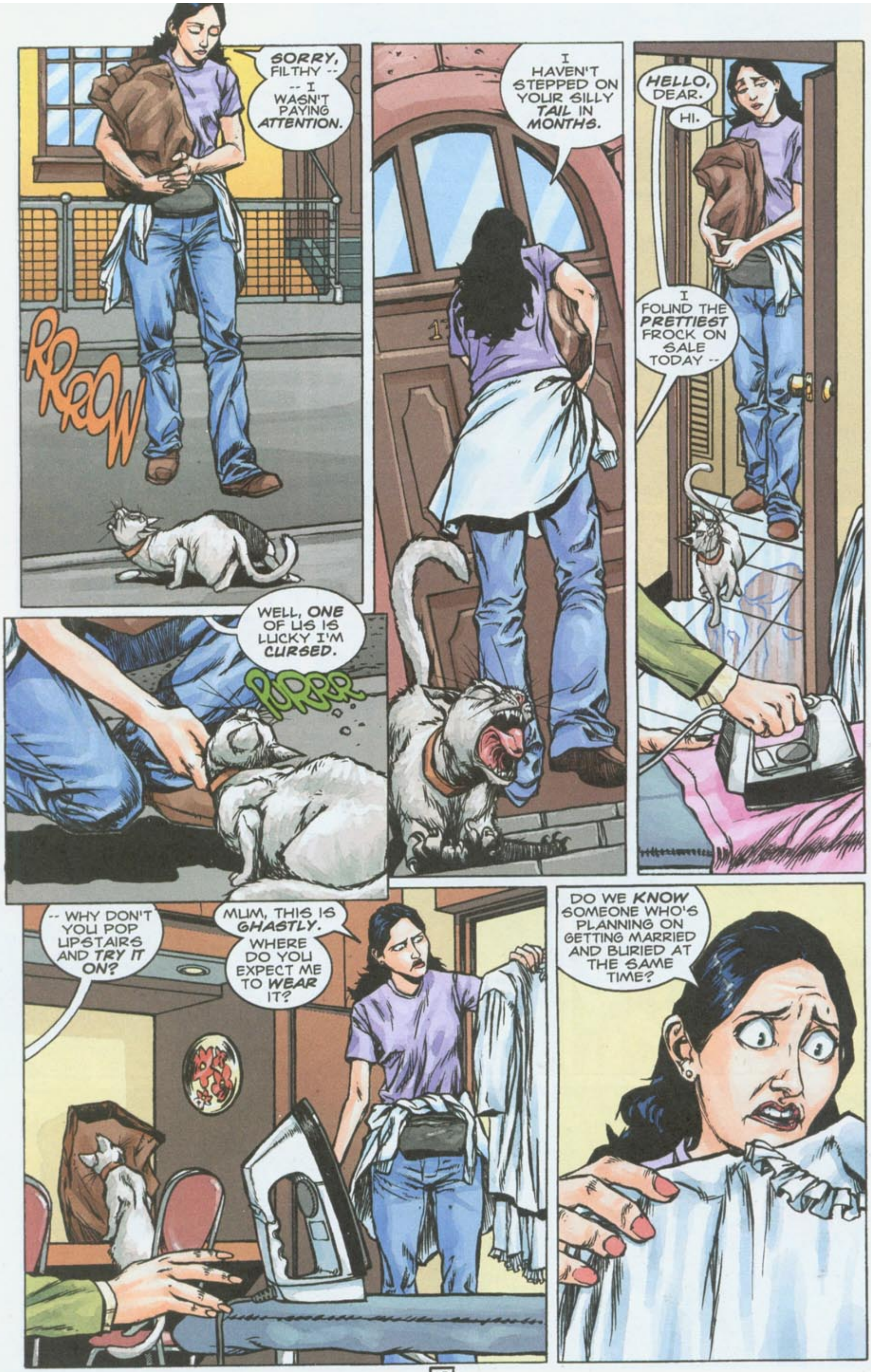

I THINK I COULD ACTUALLY HAVE *FUN* RIGHT NOW, IF I KNEW WHERE THERE *WAS* ANY...
I'M *OVER* HIM!
I'M REALLY *OVER* HIM!
ICE CRE
ICE CRE
FINALLY!
THIS CALLS FOR...
I'LL HAVE THE *DEATH BY CHOCOLATE*, PLEASE.
WITH WHIPPED CREAM.
AND *SPRINKLES*.

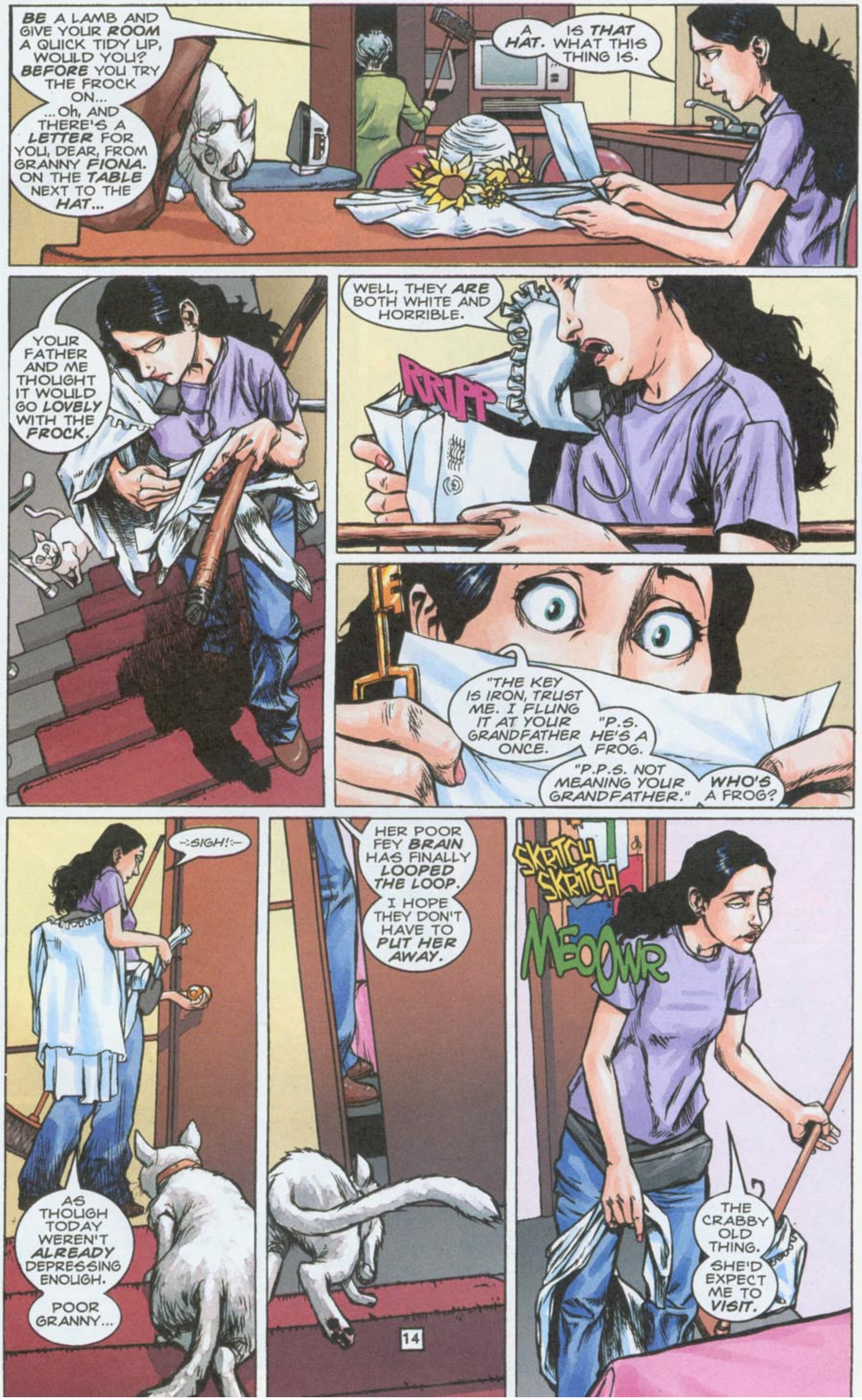

COMING UP. SO WHERE'S YOUR **PISTACHIO** BOY?
I THOUGHT I JUST SAW HIM GO BY.
Ummm... ...WE'LL GO WITH THE **NON**-HEART-SHAPED SPRINKLES, THEN --
-- MY TREAT.
OHMYGOD... ...YOU'RE THE **ONE,** AREN'T YOU?
PARDON?
THE GIRL IN THE **NEWS,** THE **MIRACLE GIRL** --
-- THE ONE WHO WALKS ON **AIR.**
THAT'S ME.
TATTLER
Ummm... ...AREN'T YOU GOING TO EAT YOUR **ICE CREAM?**
I **CAN'T.**
YOU **REMINDED ME** JUST IN TIME, THANKS.
ON A **DIET?**
NO.
JUST UNDER A **CURSE.**

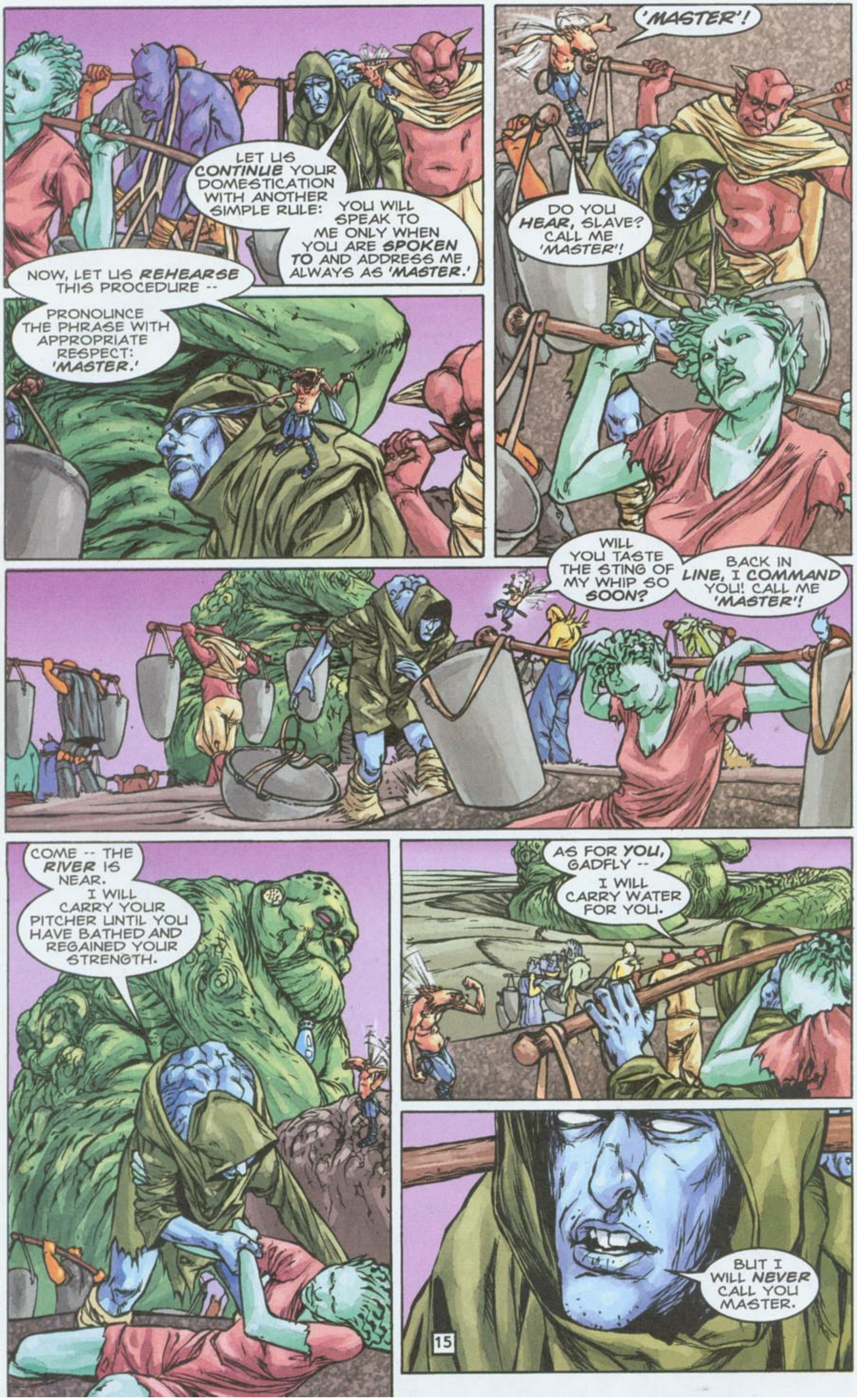

AND, Oh...
...I KNOW THAT EVERYONE IS *INTO* FAIRIES THIS MONTH, BUT I REALLY *WOULD* GET RID OF THAT *NECKLACE*, IF I WERE YOU.
I *BELIEVE* IN FAIRIES, ACTUALLY.
SO DO I.
I'M TIRED OF THIS.
CHRIST!

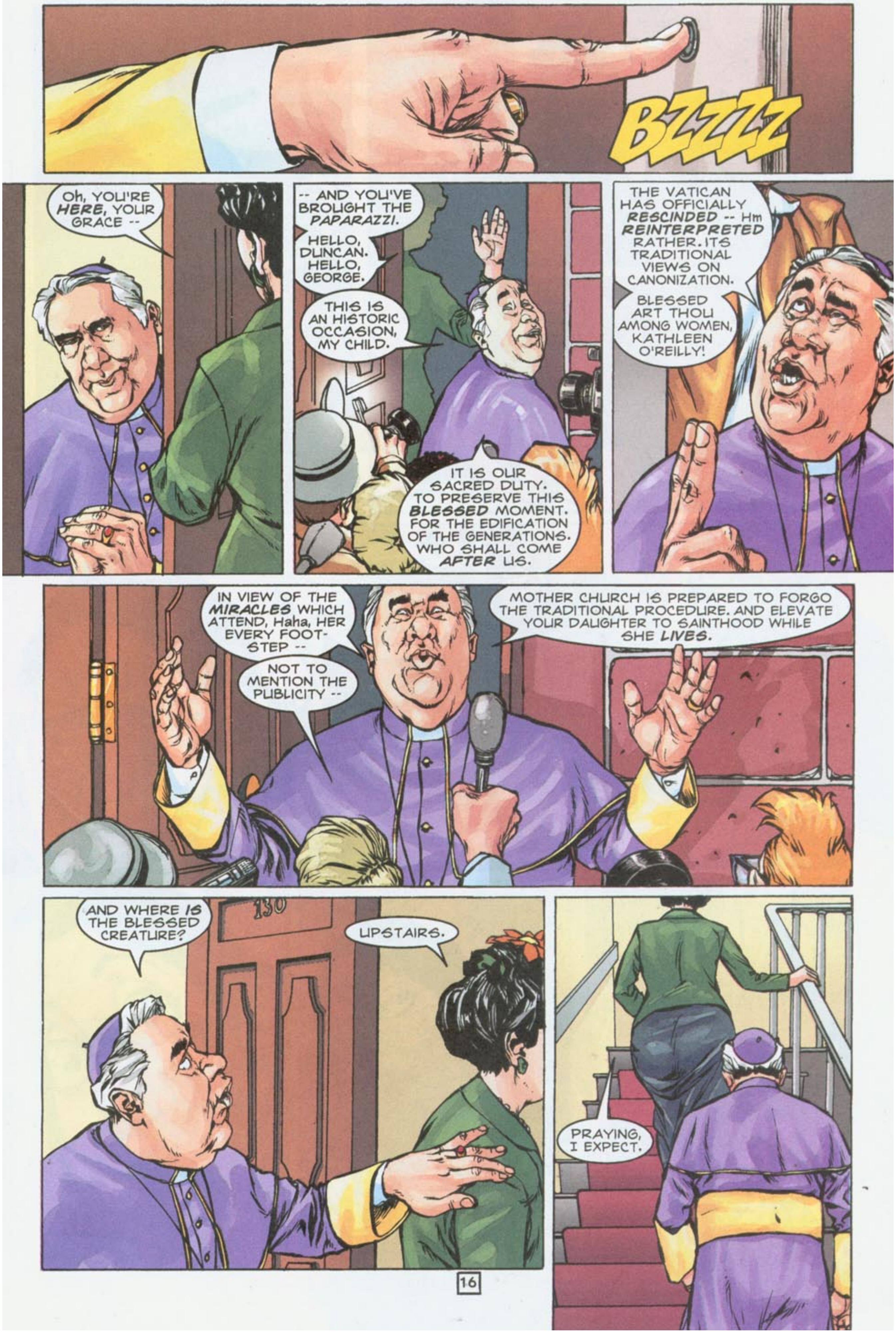

I WANT TO BE *NORMAL*.
I WANT TO GO BACK TO *SCHOOL* AND WORRY ABOUT *GRADES*.
I WANT THE BOYS TO TRY TO SNEAK LOOKS DOWN MY *SHIRT* AGAIN, INSTEAD OF STARING AT MY *BOOTS*.
I WANT TO HAVE FRIENDS WHO DON'T CROSS *THEMSELVES* WHEN THEY SEE ME COMING.
I WANT --
-- I WANT MY *LIFE* BACK.

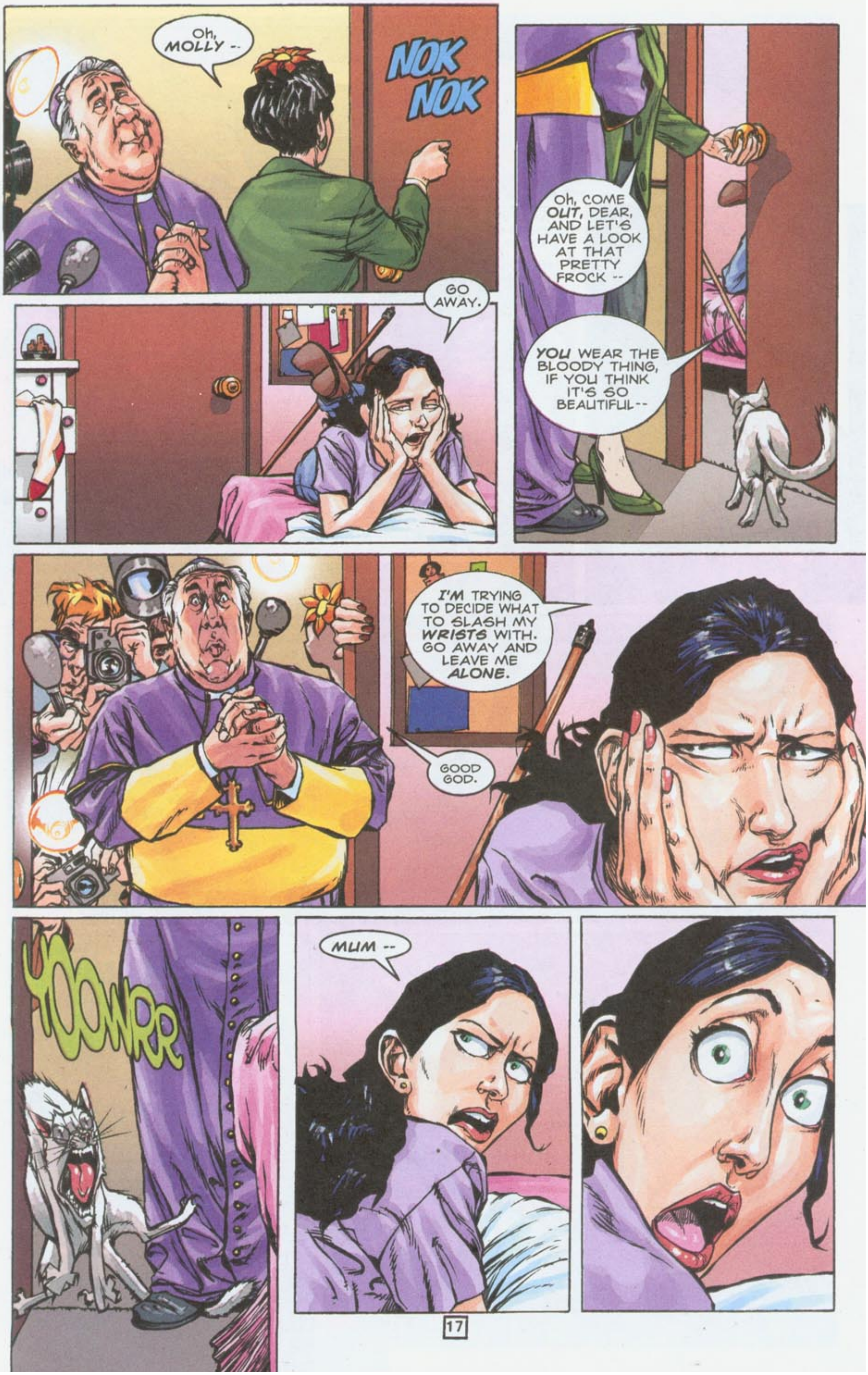

CLANG
ATTENTION, UNDERFOLK --
UNDERFOLK?
SUCH IS YOUR NEW LOT IN LIFE!
ACCEPT THE DESIGNATION GRACIOUSLY, AND YOU WILL AVOID MUCH PAIN AND HUMILIATION.
COME, COME -- STEP LIVELY, ALL!
A DAY OF HEALTHFUL EXERCISE AWAITS YOU, BENEATH THE BROILING SUN!
HUNCHBACK! WHY DO YOU STARE SO INSOLENTLY AT ME?
BECAUSE I KNOW YOU... TAP THE HOPEFUL.
YOU LED ME TO THIS PLACE AND BETRAYED ME.
YOU MUST NOT BE SURPRISED IF I WISH TO REMEMBER YOUR FACE.
YOU ARE A HAUGHTY FELLOW.
SO YOU SAY.
I DO NOT SHARE YOUR OPINION.
HAH!
WE WILL RESUME THIS DISCUSSION AT A LATER TIME, PROUD ONE --
WHEN YOUR STIFF NECK HAS BEEN LASHED RAW, AND YOUR CLEVER TONGUE IS PARCHED FOR WANT OF WATER.

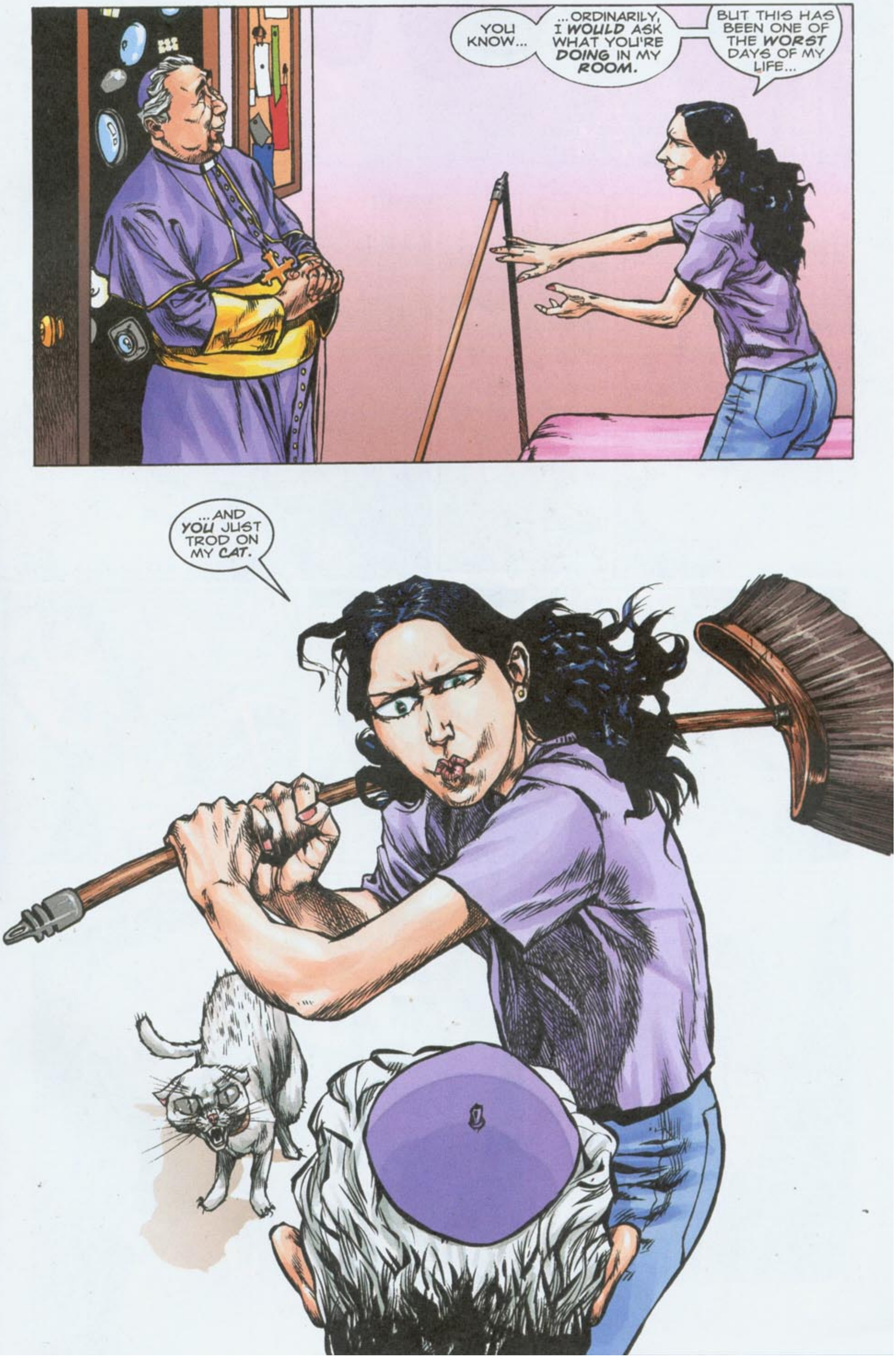

SORRY, FILTHY -- -- I WASN'T PAYING ATTENTION.
RRROW
WELL, ONE OF US IS LUCKY I'M CURSED.
PURRR
I HAVEN'T STEPPED ON YOUR SILLY TAIL IN MONTHS.
HELLO, DEAR.
HI.
I FOUND THE PRETTIEST FROCK ON SALE TODAY --
-- WHY DON'T YOU POP UPSTAIRS AND TRY IT ON?
MUM, THIS IS GHASTLY. WHERE DO YOU EXPECT ME TO WEAR IT?
DO WE KNOW SOMEONE WHO'S PLANNING ON GETTING MARRIED AND BURIED AT THE SAME TIME?

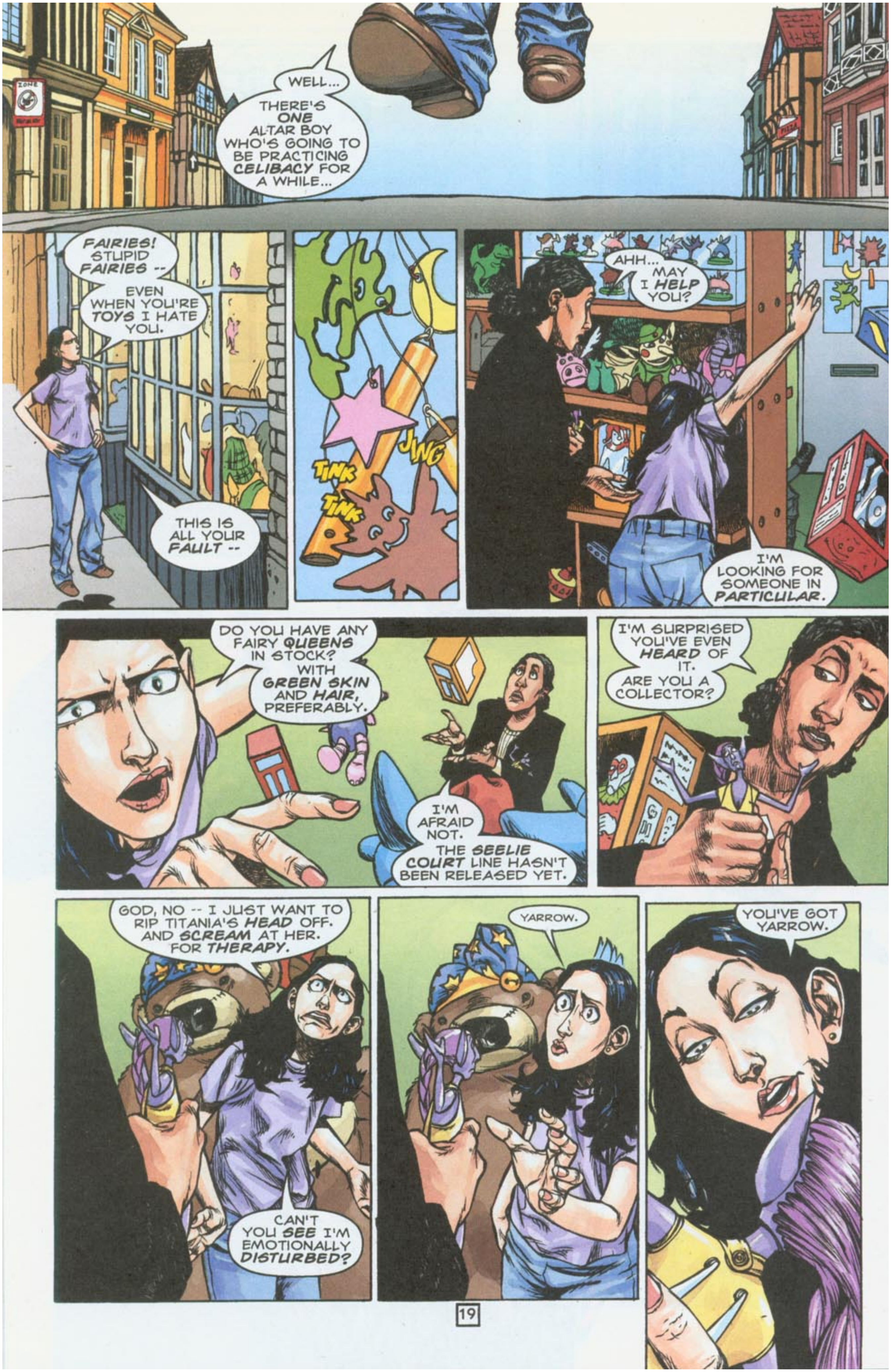

BE A LAMB AND GIVE YOUR ROOM A QUICK TIDY UP, WOULD YOU? BEFORE YOU TRY THE FROCK ON...
...Oh, AND THERE'S A LETTER FOR YOU, DEAR, FROM GRANNY FIONA. ON THE TABLE NEXT TO THE HAT...
A HAT.
IS THAT WHAT THIS THING IS.
YOUR FATHER AND ME THOUGHT IT WOULD GO LOVELY WITH THE FROCK.
WELL, THEY ARE BOTH WHITE AND HORRIBLE.
RRIPP
"THE KEY IS IRON, TRUST ME. I FLUNG IT AT YOUR GRANDFATHER ONCE.
"P.S. HE'S A FROG.
"P.P.S. NOT MEANING YOUR GRANDFATHER."
WHO'S A FROG?
–SIGH!–
AS THOUGH TODAY WEREN'T ALREADY DEPRESSING ENOUGH.
POOR GRANNY...
HER POOR FEY BRAIN HAS FINALLY LOOPED THE LOOP.
I HOPE THEY DON'T HAVE TO PUT HER AWAY.
SKRITCH SKRITCH
MEOOWR
THE CRABBY OLD THING.
SHE'D EXPECT ME TO VISIT.

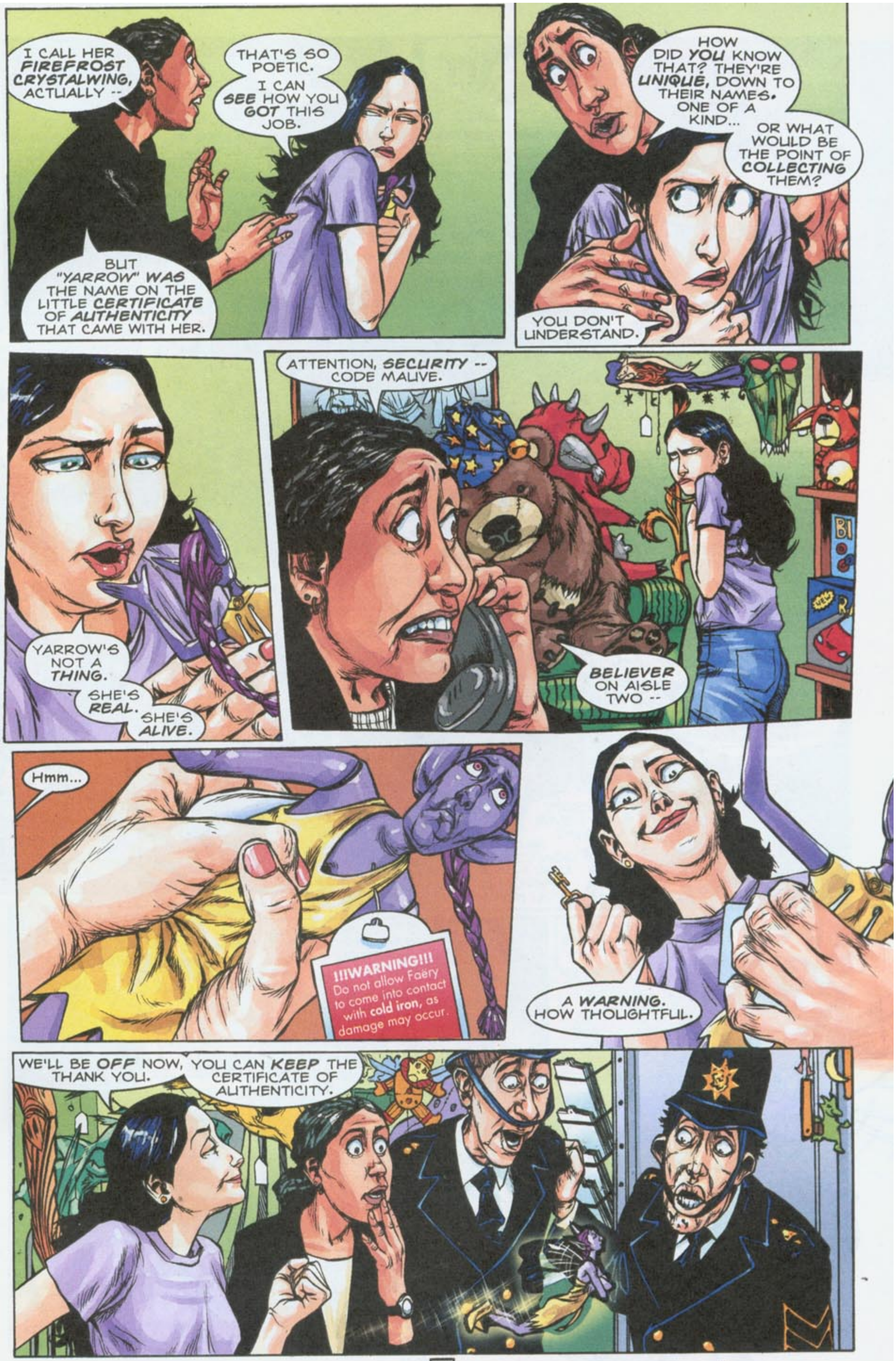

LET US CONTINUE YOUR DOMESTICATION WITH ANOTHER SIMPLE RULE:
YOU WILL SPEAK TO ME ONLY WHEN YOU ARE SPOKEN TO AND ADDRESS ME ALWAYS AS 'MASTER.'
NOW, LET US REHEARSE THIS PROCEDURE --
PRONOUNCE THE PHRASE WITH APPROPRIATE RESPECT: 'MASTER.'
'MASTER'!
DO YOU HEAR, SLAVE? CALL ME 'MASTER'!
WILL YOU TASTE THE STING OF MY WHIP SO SOON?
BACK IN LINE, I COMMAND YOU! CALL ME 'MASTER'!
COME -- THE RIVER IS NEAR.
I WILL CARRY YOUR PITCHER UNTIL YOU HAVE BATHED AND REGAINED YOUR STRENGTH.
AS FOR YOU, GADFLY --
I WILL CARRY WATER FOR YOU.
BUT I WILL NEVER CALL YOU MASTER.

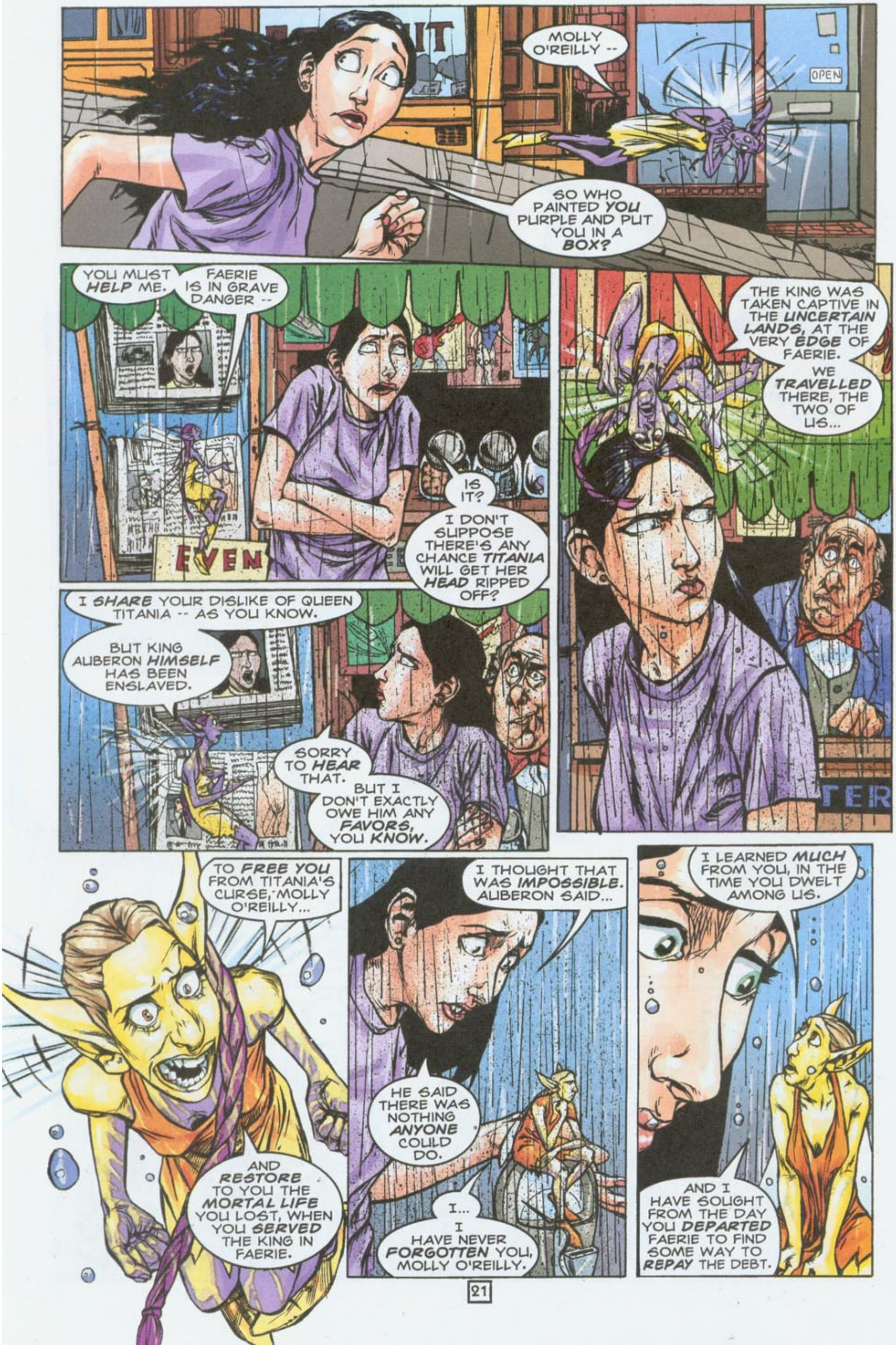

BZZZZ
Oh, YOU'RE HERE, YOUR GRACE --
-- AND YOU'VE BROUGHT THE PAPARAZZI.
HELLO, DUNCAN. HELLO, GEORGE.
THIS IS AN HISTORIC OCCASION, MY CHILD.
IT IS OUR SACRED DUTY. TO PRESERVE THIS BLESSED MOMENT. FOR THE EDIFICATION OF THE GENERATIONS. WHO SHALL COME AFTER US.
THE VATICAN HAS OFFICIALLY RESCINDED -- Hm REINTERPRETED RATHER. ITS TRADITIONAL VIEWS ON CANONIZATION.
BLESSED ART THOU AMONG WOMEN, KATHLEEN O'REILLY!
IN VIEW OF THE MIRACLES WHICH ATTEND, Haha, HER EVERY FOOTSTEP --
NOT TO MENTION THE PUBLICITY --
MOTHER CHURCH IS PREPARED TO FORGO THE TRADITIONAL PROCEDURE. AND ELEVATE YOUR DAUGHTER TO SAINTHOOD WHILE SHE LIVES.
130
AND WHERE IS THE BLESSED CREATURE?
UPSTAIRS.
PRAYING, I EXPECT.

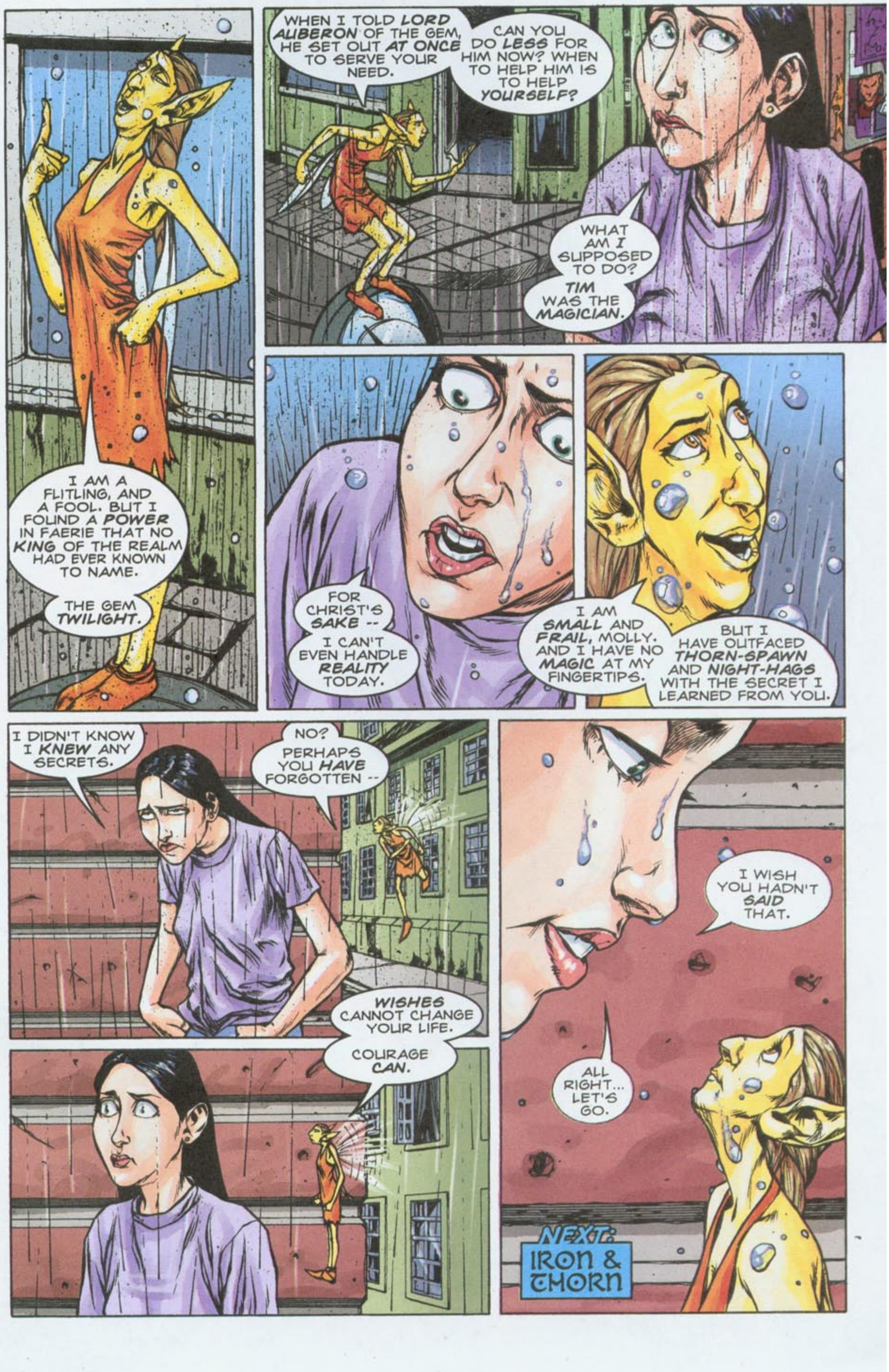

Oh, *MOLLY* --
NOK NOK
Oh, COME *OUT,* DEAR, AND LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT THAT PRETTY FROCK --
GO AWAY.
YOU WEAR THE BLOODY THING, IF YOU THINK IT'S SO BEAUTIFUL--
I'M TRYING TO DECIDE WHAT TO SLASH MY *WRISTS* WITH. GO AWAY AND LEAVE ME *ALONE.*
GOOD GOD.
YOOWRR
MUM --

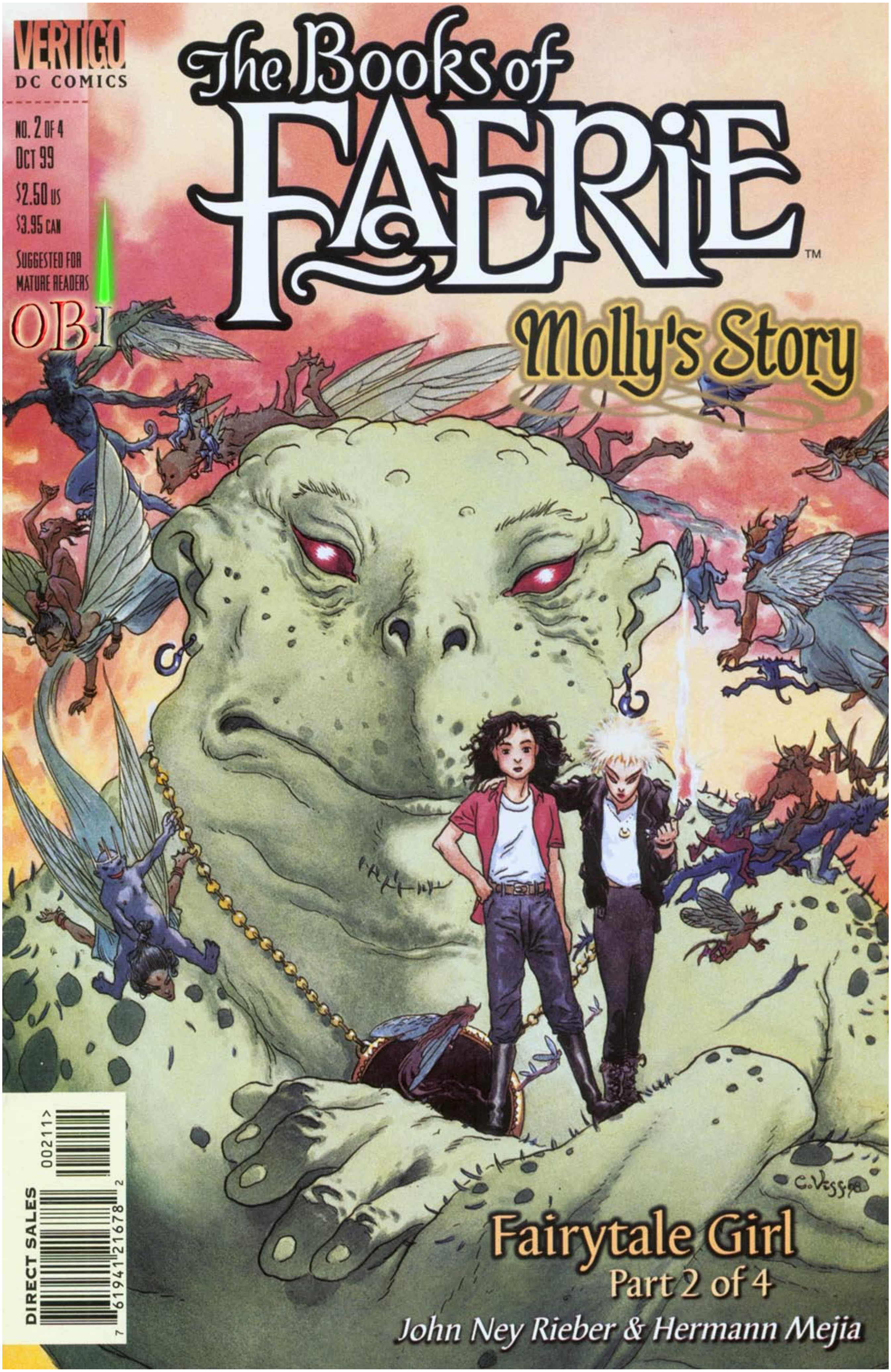

YOU KNOW...
...ORDINARILY, I *WOULD* ASK WHAT YOU'RE *DOING* IN MY *ROOM.*
BUT THIS HAS BEEN ONE OF THE *WORST* DAYS OF MY LIFE...
...AND *YOU* JUST TROD ON MY *CAT.*


WELL... THERE'S ONE ALTAR BOY WHO'S GOING TO BE PRACTICING CELIBACY FOR A WHILE...
FAIRIES! STUPID FAIRIES --
EVEN WHEN YOU'RE TOYS I HATE YOU.
THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT --
JING
TINK
TINK
AHH... MAY I HELP YOU?
I'M LOOKING FOR SOMEONE IN PARTICULAR.
DO YOU HAVE ANY FAIRY QUEENS IN STOCK? WITH GREEN SKIN AND HAIR, PREFERABLY.
I'M AFRAID NOT. THE SEELIE COURT LINE HASN'T BEEN RELEASED YET.
I'M SURPRISED YOU'VE EVEN HEARD OF IT. ARE YOU A COLLECTOR?
GOD, NO -- I JUST WANT TO RIP TITANIA'S HEAD OFF. AND SCREAM AT HER. FOR THERAPY.
CAN'T YOU SEE I'M EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED?
YARROW.
YOU'VE GOT YARROW.


I CALL HER FIREFROST CRYSTALWING, ACTUALLY --
THAT'S SO POETIC. I CAN SEE HOW YOU GOT THIS JOB.
BUT "YARROW" WAS THE NAME ON THE LITTLE CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICITY THAT CAME WITH HER.
HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT? THEY'RE UNIQUE, DOWN TO THEIR NAMES. ONE OF A KIND...
OR WHAT WOULD BE THE POINT OF COLLECTING THEM?
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.
YARROW'S NOT A THING.
SHE'S REAL.
SHE'S ALIVE.
ATTENTION, SECURITY -- CODE MAUVE.
BELIEVER ON AISLE TWO --
Hmm...
!!!WARNING!!! Do not allow Faery to come into contact with cold iron, as damage may occur.
A WARNING. HOW THOUGHTFUL.
WE'LL BE OFF NOW, THANK YOU.
YOU CAN KEEP THE CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICITY.


MOLLY O'REILLY --
OPEN
SO WHO PAINTED YOU PURPLE AND PUT YOU IN A BOX?
YOU MUST HELP ME.
FAERIE IS IN GRAVE DANGER --
IS IT?
I DON'T SUPPOSE THERE'S ANY CHANCE TITANIA WILL GET HER HEAD RIPPED OFF?
EVEN
I SHARE YOUR DISLIKE OF QUEEN TITANIA -- AS YOU KNOW.
BUT KING AUBERON HIMSELF HAS BEEN ENSLAVED.
SORRY TO HEAR THAT.
BUT I DON'T EXACTLY OWE HIM ANY FAVORS, YOU KNOW.
THE KING WAS TAKEN CAPTIVE IN THE UNCERTAIN LANDS, AT THE VERY EDGE OF FAERIE.
WE TRAVELLED THERE, THE TWO OF US...
TER
TO FREE YOU FROM TITANIA'S CURSE, MOLLY O'REILLY...
AND RESTORE TO YOU THE MORTAL LIFE YOU LOST, WHEN YOU SERVED THE KING IN FAERIE.
I THOUGHT THAT WAS IMPOSSIBLE. AUBERON SAID...
HE SAID THERE WAS NOTHING ANYONE COULD DO.
I...
I HAVE NEVER FORGOTTEN YOU, MOLLY O'REILLY.
I LEARNED MUCH FROM YOU, IN THE TIME YOU DWELT AMONG US.
AND I HAVE SOUGHT FROM THE DAY YOU DEPARTED FAERIE TO FIND SOME WAY TO REPAY THE DEBT.


I AM A FLITLING, AND A FOOL. BUT I FOUND A POWER IN FAERIE THAT NO KING OF THE REALM HAD EVER KNOWN TO NAME.
THE GEM TWILIGHT.
WHEN I TOLD LORD AUBERON OF THE GEM, HE SET OUT AT ONCE TO SERVE YOUR NEED.
CAN YOU DO LESS FOR HIM NOW? WHEN TO HELP HIM IS TO HELP YOURSELF?
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO? TIM WAS THE MAGICIAN.
FOR CHRIST'S SAKE -- I CAN'T EVEN HANDLE REALITY TODAY.
I AM SMALL AND FRAIL, MOLLY. AND I HAVE NO MAGIC AT MY FINGERTIPS.
BUT I HAVE OUTFACED THORN-SPAWN AND NIGHT-HAGS WITH THE SECRET I LEARNED FROM YOU.
I DIDN'T KNOW I KNEW ANY SECRETS.
NO? PERHAPS YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN --
WISHES CANNOT CHANGE YOUR LIFE.
COURAGE CAN.
I WISH YOU HADN'T SAID THAT.
ALL RIGHT... LET'S GO.
NEXT: IRON & THORN



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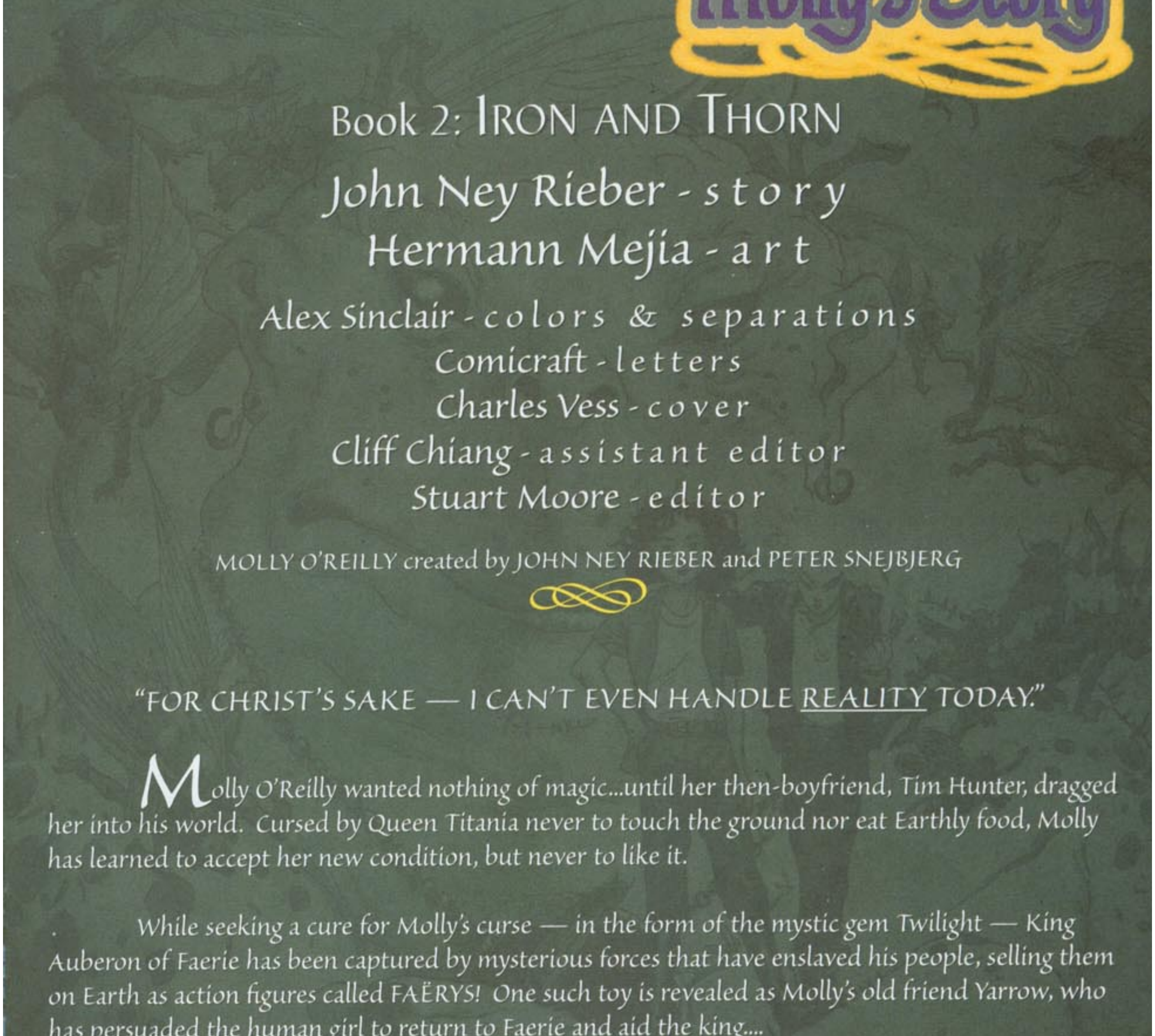

Book 2: IRON AND THORN

John Ney Rieber - story
Hermann Mejia - art
Alex Sinclair - colors & separations
Comicraft - letters
Charles Vess - cover
Cliff Chiang - assistant editor
Stuart Moore - editor

MOLLY O'REILLY created by JOHN NEY RIEBER and PETER SNEJBJERG

"FOR CHRIST'S SAKE — I CAN'T EVEN HANDLE REALITY TODAY."

Molly O'Reilly wanted nothing of magic...until her then-boyfriend, Tim Hunter, dragged her into his world. Cursed by Queen Titania never to touch the ground nor eat Earthly food, Molly has learned to accept her new condition, but never to like it.

While seeking a cure for Molly's curse — in the form of the mystic gem Twilight — King Auberon of Faerie has been captured by mysterious forces that have enslaved his people, selling them on Earth as action figures called FAËRYS! One such toy is revealed as Molly's old friend Yarrow, who has persuaded the human girl to return to Faerie and aid the king....

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THE BOOKS OF FAERIE: MOLLY'S STORY 2. October, 1999. Published monthly by DC Comics, 1700 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. Copyright © 1999 DC Comics. All Rights Reserved. Vertigo and all characters featured in this issue, the distinctive likenesses thereof, and all related indicia are trademarks of DC Comics.
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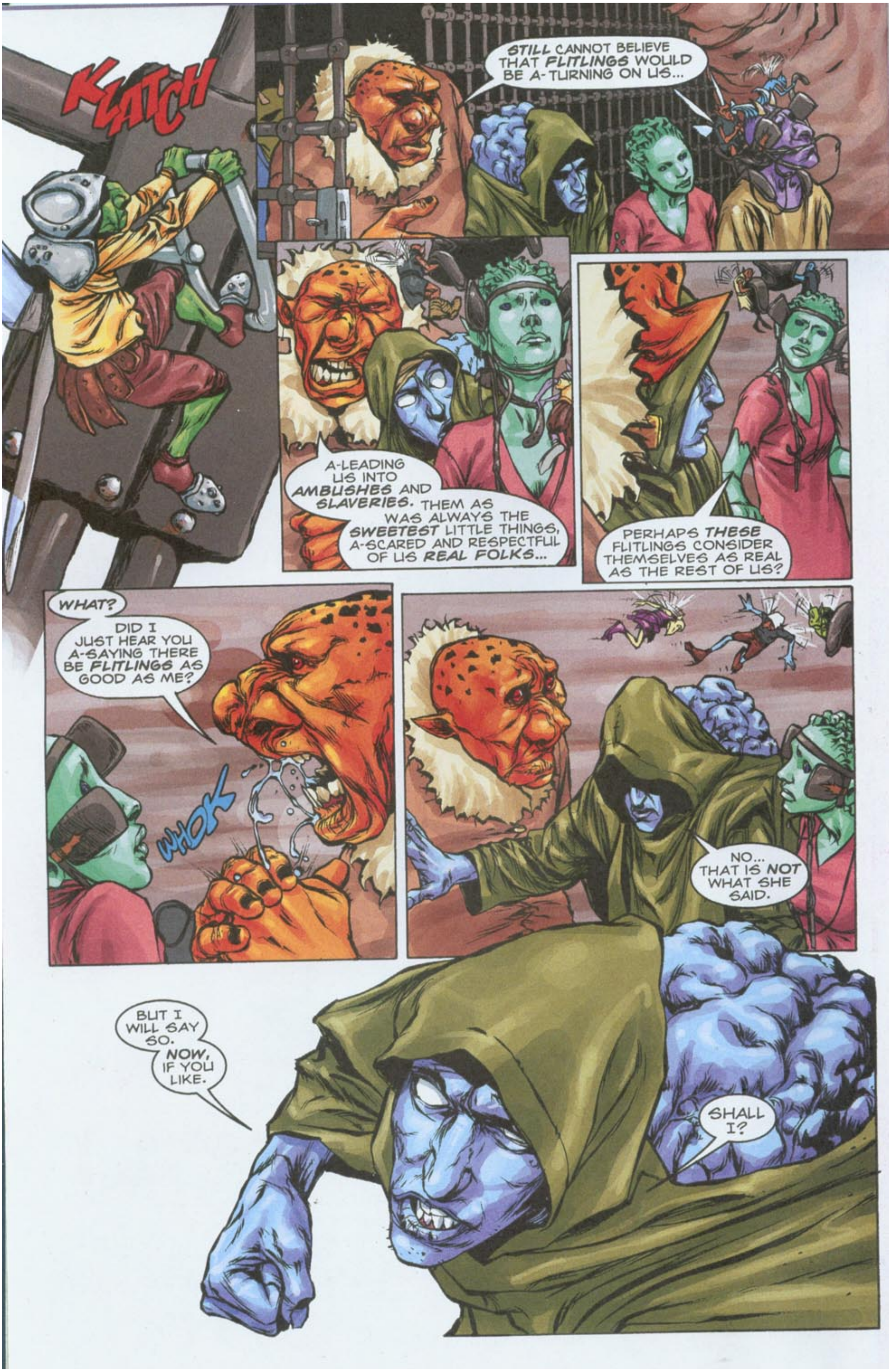
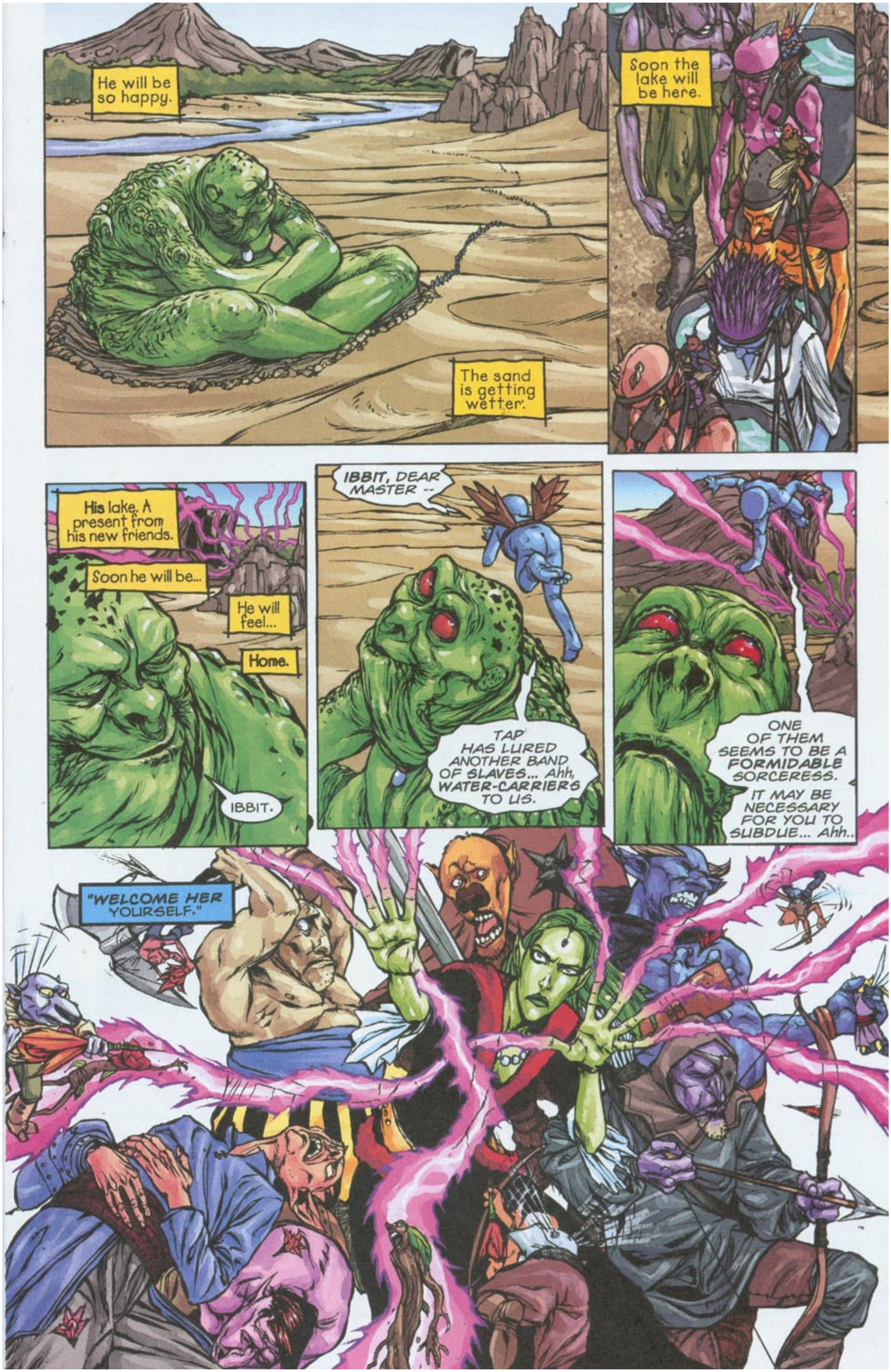
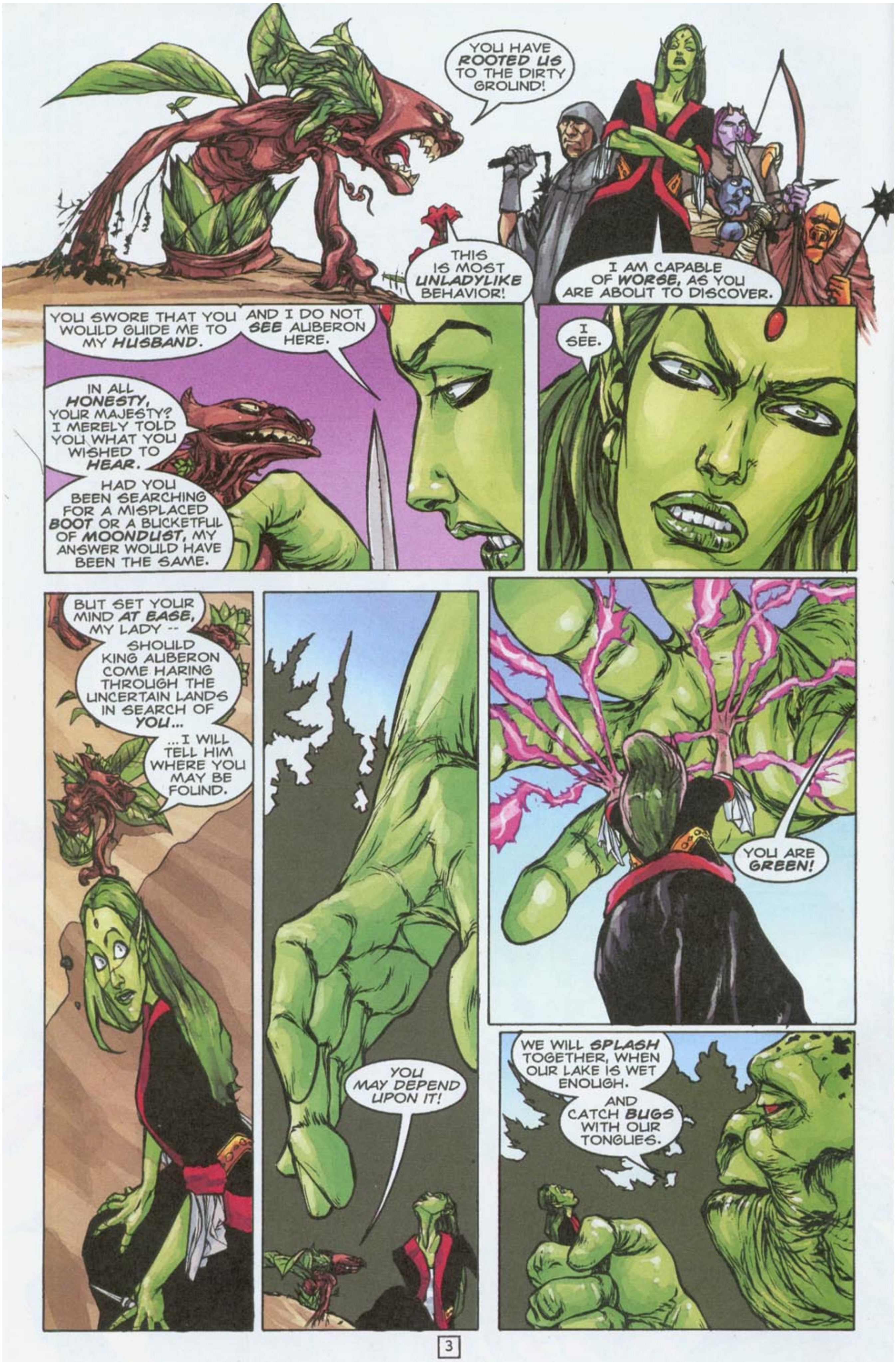
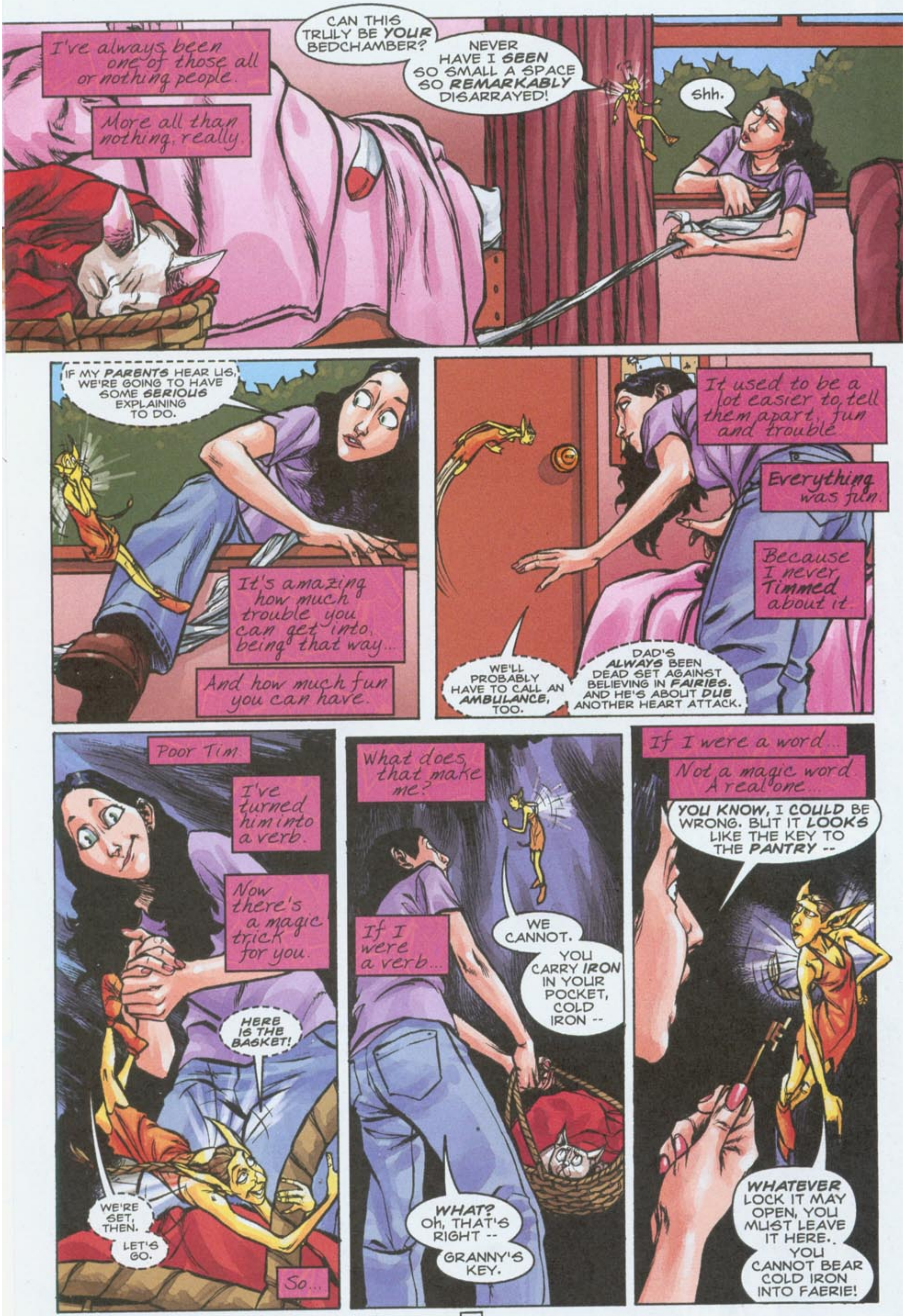
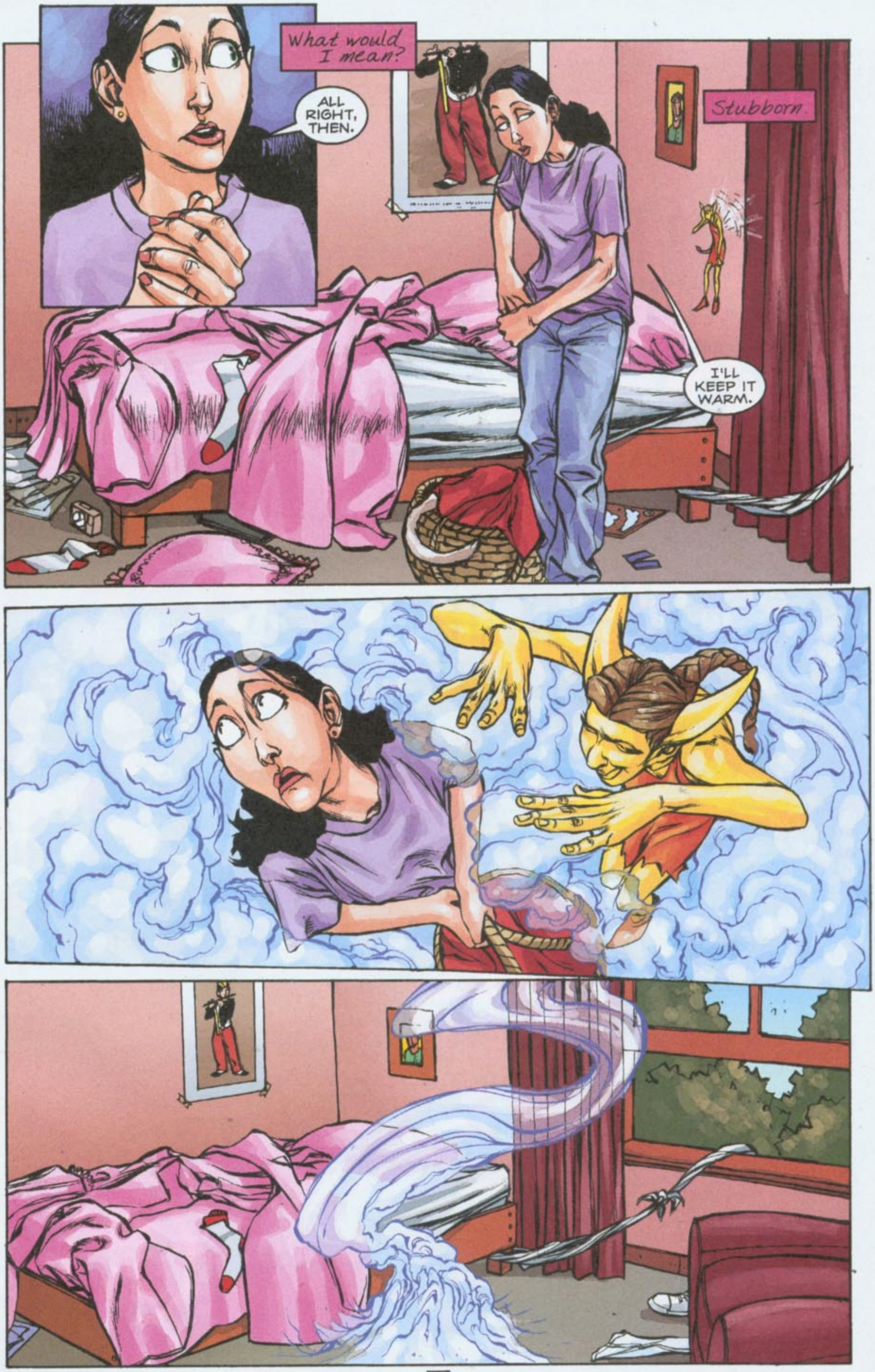
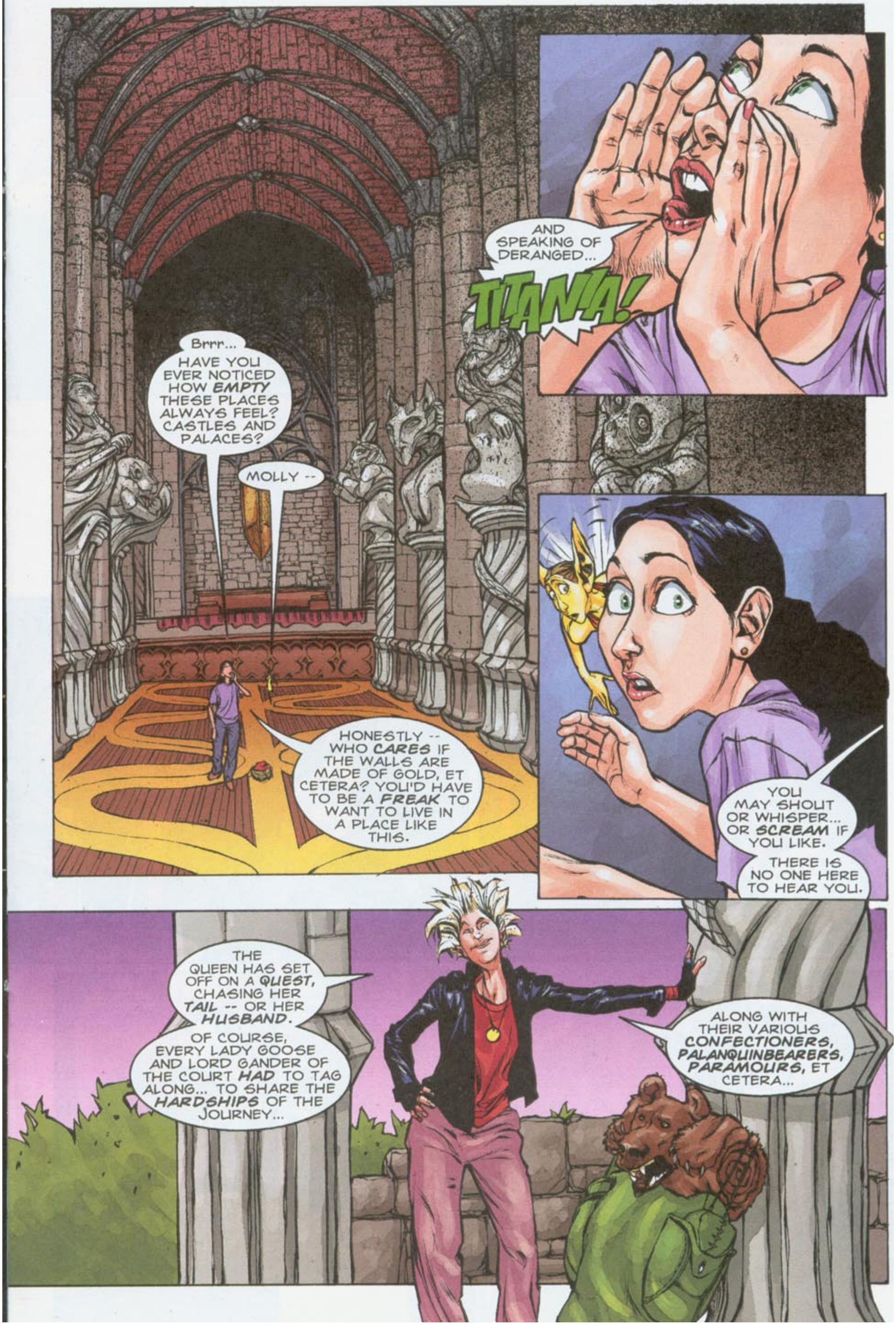

KLATCH
STILL CANNOT BELIEVE THAT FLITLINGS WOULD BE A-TURNING ON US...
A-LEADING US INTO AMBUSHES AND SLAVERIES. THEM AS WAS ALWAYS THE SWEETEST LITTLE THINGS, A-SCARED AND RESPECTFUL OF US REAL FOLKS...
PERHAPS THESE FLITLINGS CONSIDER THEMSELVES AS REAL AS THE REST OF US?
WHAT?
DID I JUST HEAR YOU A-SAYING THERE BE FLITLINGS AS GOOD AS ME?
WHOK
NO... THAT IS NOT WHAT SHE SAID.
BUT I WILL SAY SO. NOW, IF YOU LIKE.
SHALL I?

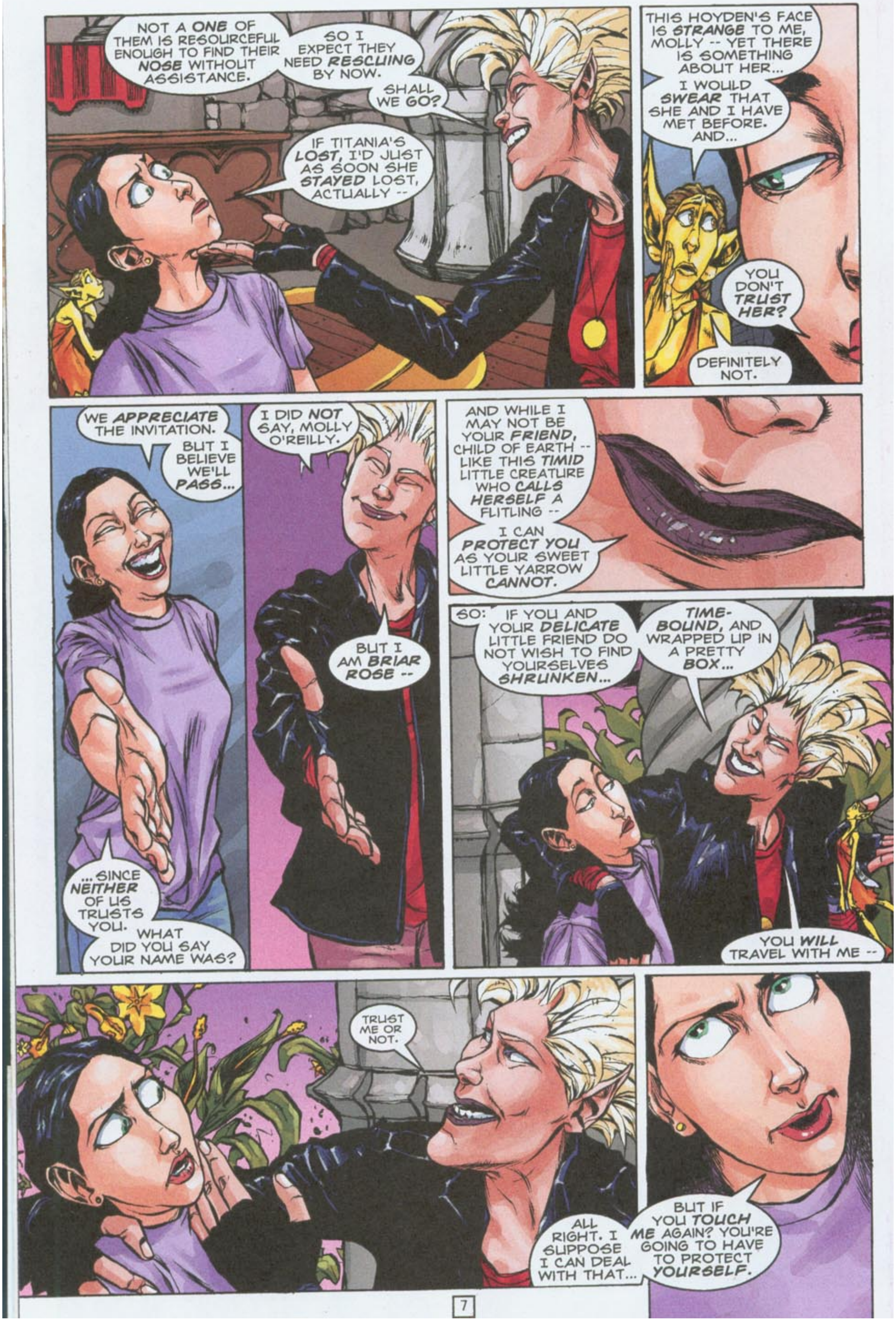

He will be so happy.
The sand is getting wetter.
Soon the lake will be here.
His lake. A present from his new friends.
Soon he will be...
He will feel...
Home.
IBBIT.
IBBIT, DEAR MASTER --
TAP HAS LURED ANOTHER BAND OF SLAVES... Ahh, WATER-CARRIERS TO US.
ONE OF THEM SEEMS TO BE A FORMIDABLE SORCERESS.
IT MAY BE NECESSARY FOR YOU TO SUBDUE... Ahh..
"WELCOME HER YOURSELF."

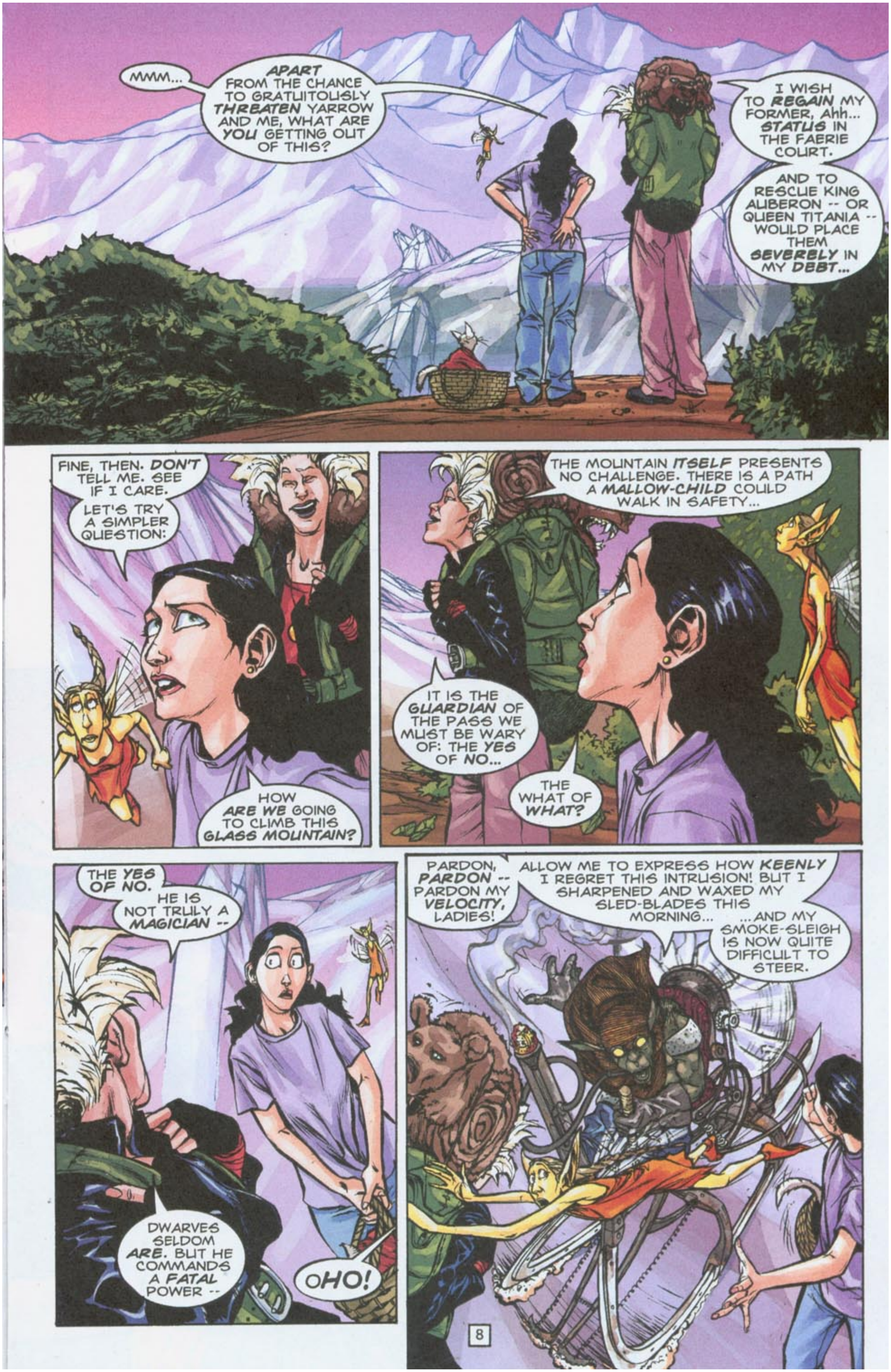

YOU HAVE ROOTED US TO THE DIRTY GROUND!
THIS IS MOST UNLADYLIKE BEHAVIOR!
I AM CAPABLE OF WORSE, AS YOU ARE ABOUT TO DISCOVER.
YOU SWORE THAT YOU WOULD GUIDE ME TO MY HUSBAND.
AND I DO NOT SEE AUBERON HERE.
IN ALL HONESTY, YOUR MAJESTY? I MERELY TOLD YOU WHAT YOU WISHED TO HEAR.
HAD YOU BEEN SEARCHING FOR A MISPLACED BOOT OR A BUCKETFUL OF MOONDUST, MY ANSWER WOULD HAVE BEEN THE SAME.
I SEE.
BUT SET YOUR MIND AT EASE, MY LADY --
SHOULD KING AUBERON COME HARING THROUGH THE UNCERTAIN LANDS IN SEARCH OF YOU...
...I WILL TELL HIM WHERE YOU MAY BE FOUND.
YOU MAY DEPEND UPON IT!
YOU ARE GREEN!
WE WILL SPLASH TOGETHER, WHEN OUR LAKE IS WET ENOUGH.
AND CATCH BUGS WITH OUR TONGUES.

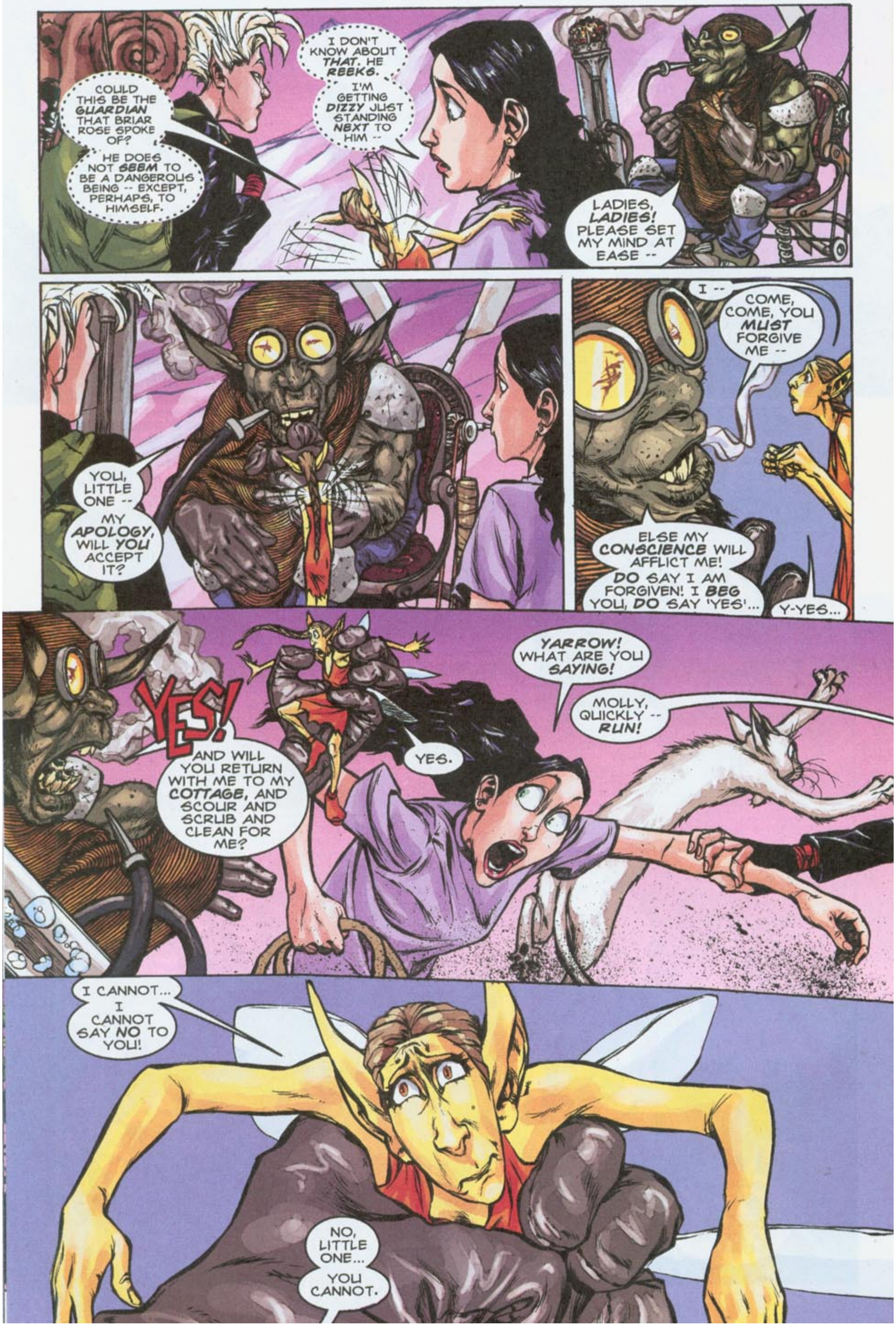

I've always been one of those all or nothing people.
More all than nothing, really.
CAN THIS TRULY BE YOUR BEDCHAMBER?
NEVER HAVE I SEEN SO SMALL A SPACE SO REMARKABLY DISARRAYED!
Shh.
IF MY PARENTS HEAR US, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE SOME SERIOUS EXPLAINING TO DO.
It's amazing how much trouble you can get into, being that way...
And how much fun you can have.
It used to be a lot easier to tell them apart, fun and trouble.
Everything was fun.
Because I never Timmed about it.
DAD'S ALWAYS BEEN DEAD SET AGAINST BELIEVING IN FAIRIES. AND HE'S ABOUT DUE ANOTHER HEART ATTACK.
WE'LL PROBABLY HAVE TO CALL AN AMBULANCE, TOO.
Poor Tim.
I've turned him into a verb.
Now there's a magic trick for you.
HERE IS THE BASKET!
WE'RE SET, THEN.
LET'S GO.
So...
What does that make me?
If I were a verb...
WE CANNOT.
YOU CARRY IRON IN YOUR POCKET, COLD IRON --
WHAT? Oh, THAT'S RIGHT --
GRANNY'S KEY.
If I were a word...
Not a magic word. A real one...
YOU KNOW, I COULD BE WRONG. BUT IT LOOKS LIKE THE KEY TO THE PANTRY --
WHATEVER LOCK IT MAY OPEN, YOU MUST LEAVE IT HERE. YOU CANNOT BEAR COLD IRON INTO FAERIE!

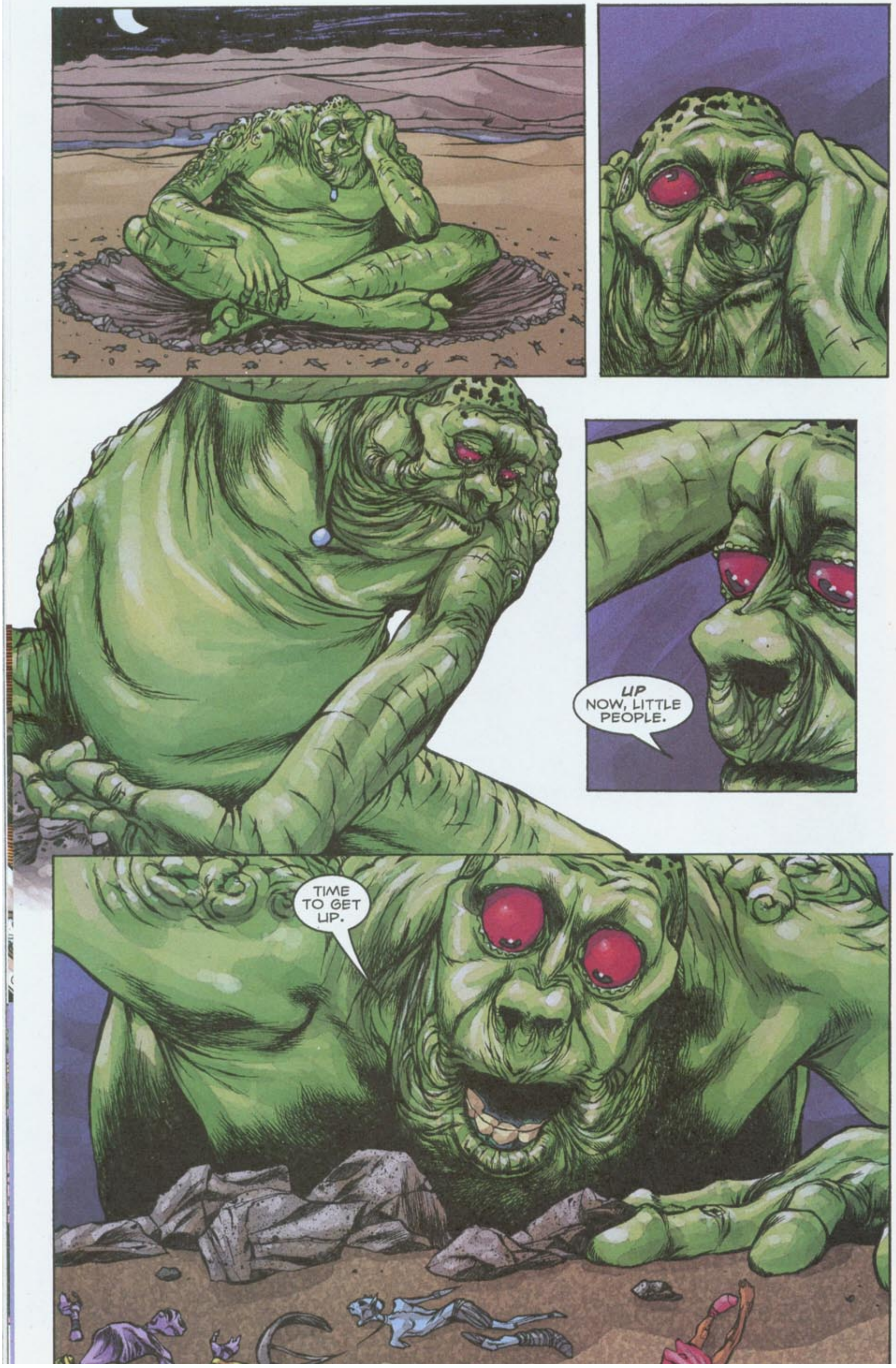

What would I mean?
ALL RIGHT, THEN.
Stubborn.
I'LL KEEP IT WARM.

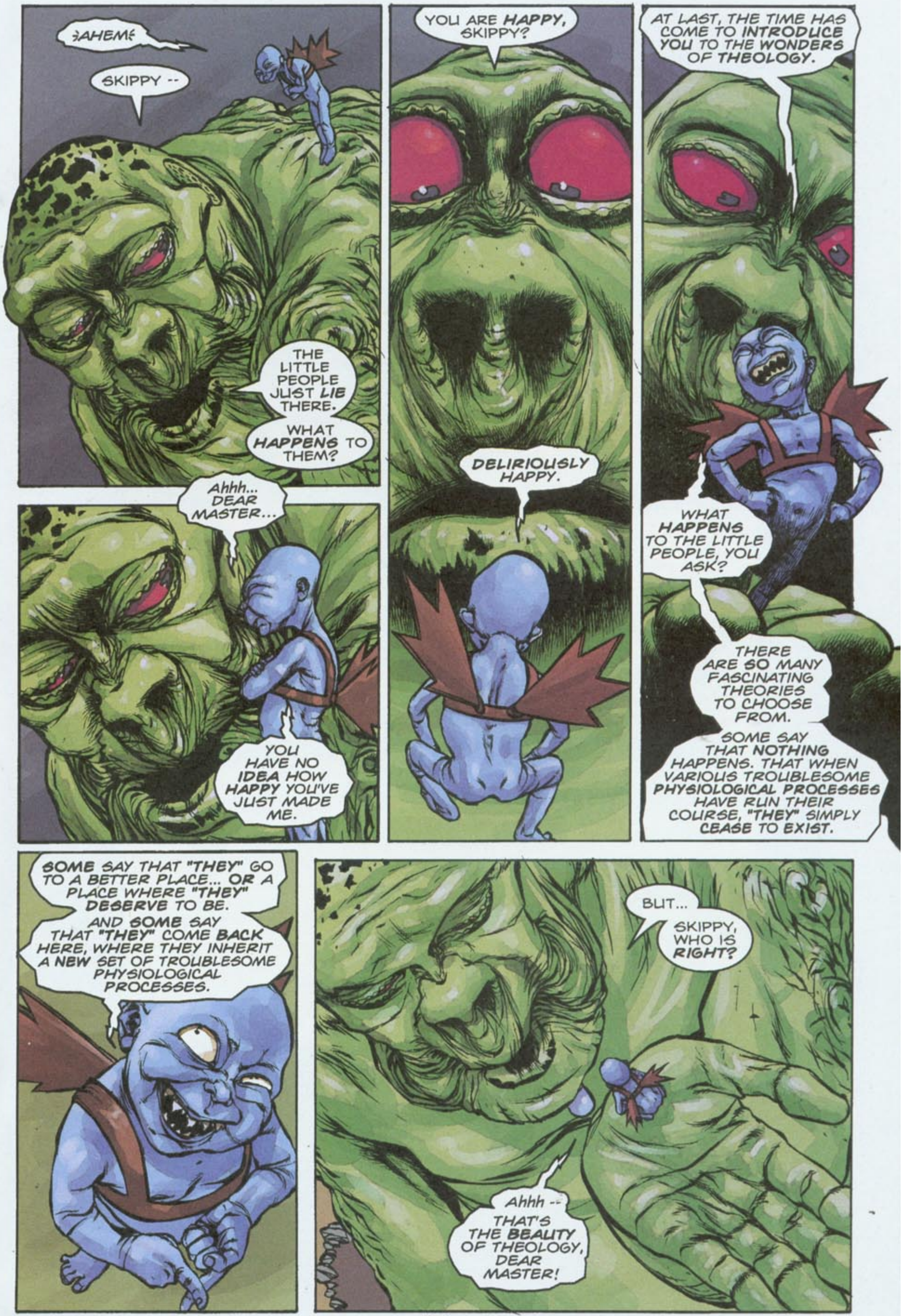

Brrr...
HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED HOW *EMPTY* THESE PLACES ALWAYS FEEL? CASTLES AND PALACES?
MOLLY --
HONESTLY -- WHO *CARES* IF THE WALLS ARE MADE OF GOLD, ET CETERA? YOU'D HAVE TO BE A *FREAK* TO WANT TO LIVE IN A PLACE LIKE THIS.
AND SPEAKING OF DERANGED...
TITANIA!
YOU MAY SHOUT OR WHISPER... OR *SCREAM* IF YOU LIKE.
THERE IS NO ONE HERE TO HEAR YOU.
THE QUEEN HAS SET OFF ON A *QUEST,* CHASING HER *TAIL* -- OR HER *HUSBAND.*
OF COURSE, EVERY LADY GOOSE AND LORD GANDER OF THE COURT *HAD* TO TAG ALONG... TO SHARE THE *HARDSHIPS* OF THE JOURNEY...
ALONG WITH THEIR VARIOUS *CONFECTIONERS, PALANQUINBEARERS, PARAMOURS,* ET CETERA...


NOT A ONE OF THEM IS RESOURCEFUL ENOUGH TO FIND THEIR NOSE WITHOUT ASSISTANCE.
SO I EXPECT THEY NEED RESCUING BY NOW.
SHALL WE GO?
IF TITANIA'S LOST, I'D JUST AS SOON SHE STAYED LOST, ACTUALLY --
THIS HOYDEN'S FACE IS STRANGE TO ME, MOLLY -- YET THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT HER...
I WOULD SWEAR THAT SHE AND I HAVE MET BEFORE. AND...
YOU DON'T TRUST HER?
DEFINITELY NOT.
WE APPRECIATE THE INVITATION.
BUT I BELIEVE WE'LL PASS...
...SINCE NEITHER OF US TRUSTS YOU.
WHAT DID YOU SAY YOUR NAME WAS?
I DID NOT SAY, MOLLY O'REILLY.
BUT I AM BRIAR ROSE --
AND WHILE I MAY NOT BE YOUR FRIEND, CHILD OF EARTH -- LIKE THIS TIMID LITTLE CREATURE WHO CALLS HERSELF A FLITLING --
I CAN PROTECT YOU AS YOUR SWEET LITTLE YARROW CANNOT.
SO: IF YOU AND YOUR DELICATE LITTLE FRIEND DO NOT WISH TO FIND YOURSELVES SHRUNKEN...
TIME-BOUND, AND WRAPPED UP IN A PRETTY BOX...
YOU WILL TRAVEL WITH ME --
TRUST ME OR NOT.
ALL RIGHT. I SUPPOSE I CAN DEAL WITH THAT...
BUT IF YOU TOUCH ME AGAIN? YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO PROTECT YOURSELF.

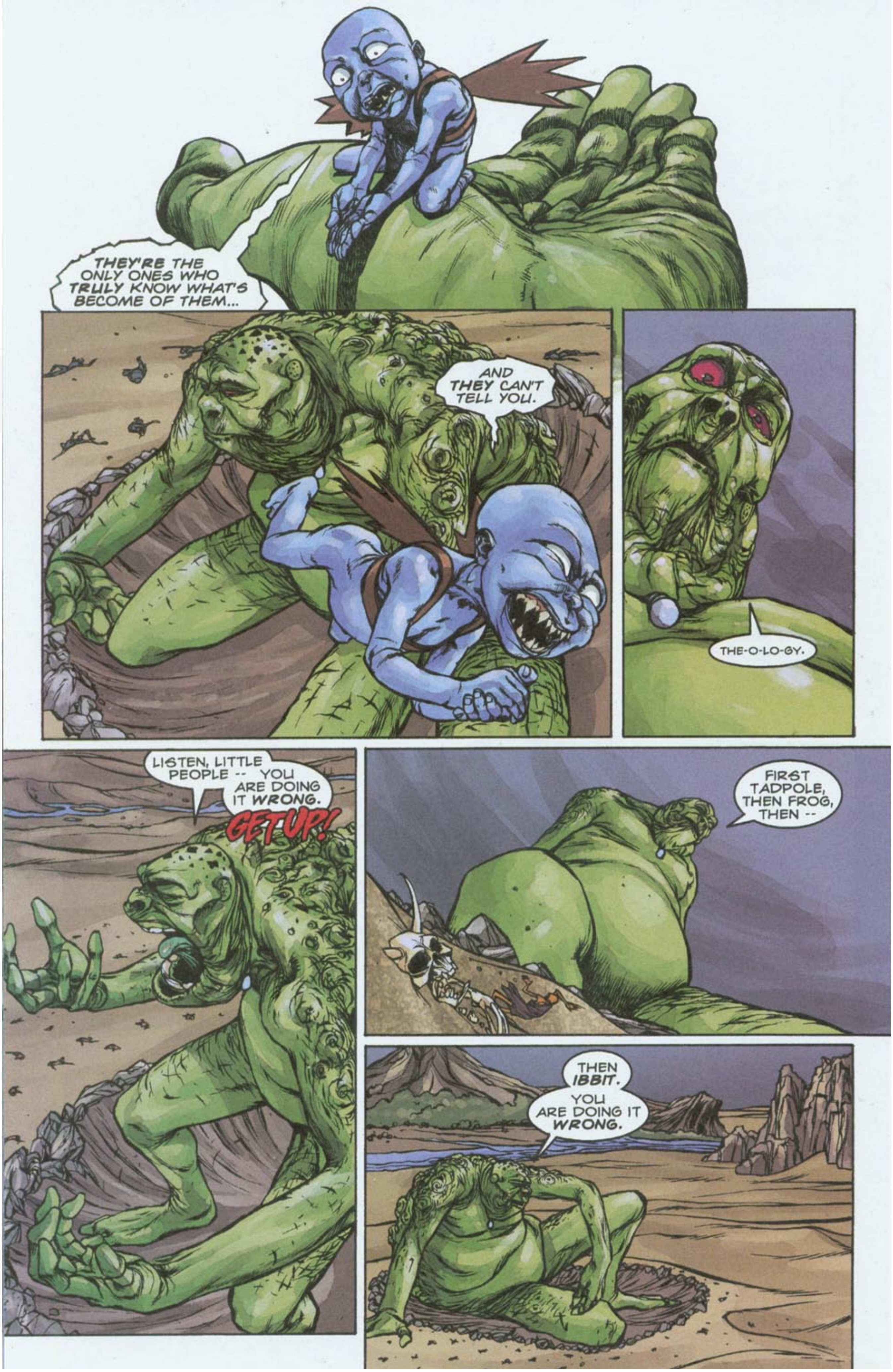

MMM...
APART FROM THE CHANCE TO GRATUITOUSLY THREATEN YARROW AND ME, WHAT ARE YOU GETTING OUT OF THIS?
I WISH TO REGAIN MY FORMER, Ahh... STATUS IN THE FAERIE COURT.
AND TO RESCUE KING AUBERON -- OR QUEEN TITANIA -- WOULD PLACE THEM SEVERELY IN MY DEBT...
FINE, THEN. DON'T TELL ME. SEE IF I CARE.
LET'S TRY A SIMPLER QUESTION:
HOW ARE WE GOING TO CLIMB THIS GLASS MOUNTAIN?
THE MOUNTAIN ITSELF PRESENTS NO CHALLENGE. THERE IS A PATH A MALLOW-CHILD COULD WALK IN SAFETY...
IT IS THE GUARDIAN OF THE PASS WE MUST BE WARY OF: THE YES OF NO...
THE WHAT OF WHAT?
THE YES OF NO.
HE IS NOT TRULY A MAGICIAN --
DWARVES SELDOM ARE. BUT HE COMMANDS A FATAL POWER --
OHO!
PARDON, PARDON -- PARDON MY VELOCITY, LADIES!
ALLOW ME TO EXPRESS HOW KEENLY I REGRET THIS INTRUSION! BUT I SHARPENED AND WAXED MY SLED-BLADES THIS MORNING...
...AND MY SMOKE-SLEIGH IS NOW QUITE DIFFICULT TO STEER.

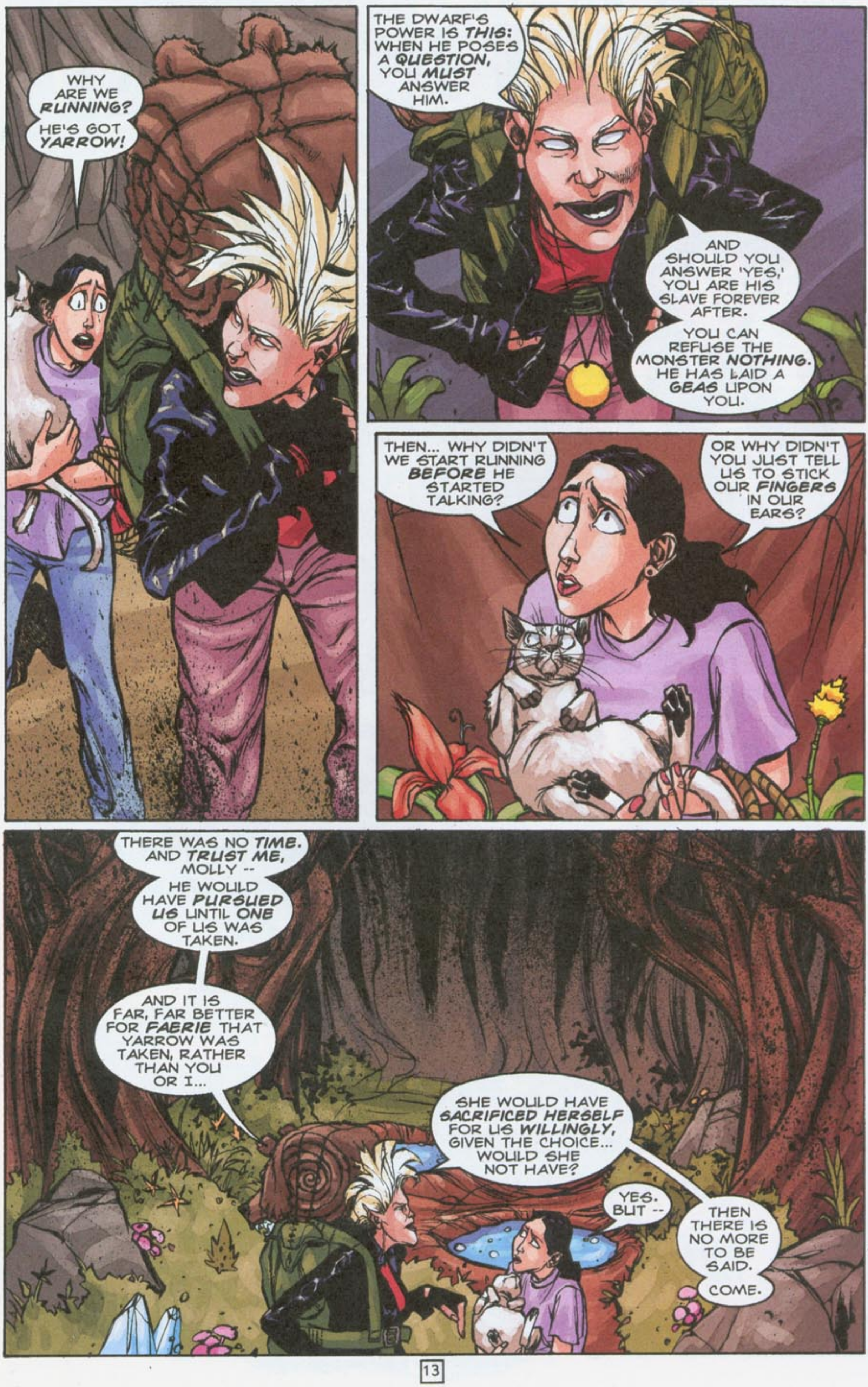

COULD THIS BE THE GUARDIAN THAT BRIAR ROSE SPOKE OF?
HE DOES NOT SEEM TO BE A DANGEROUS BEING -- EXCEPT, PERHAPS, TO HIMSELF.
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT. HE REEKS.
I'M GETTING DIZZY JUST STANDING NEXT TO HIM --
LADIES, LADIES! PLEASE SET MY MIND AT EASE --
YOU, LITTLE ONE -- MY APOLOGY, WILL YOU ACCEPT IT?
I --
COME, COME, YOU MUST FORGIVE ME --
ELSE MY CONSCIENCE WILL AFFLICT ME! DO SAY I AM FORGIVEN! I BEG YOU, DO SAY 'YES'...
Y-YES...
YES!
AND WILL YOU RETURN WITH ME TO MY COTTAGE, AND SCOUR AND SCRUB AND CLEAN FOR ME?
YES.
YARROW! WHAT ARE YOU SAYING!
MOLLY, QUICKLY -- RUN!
I CANNOT... I CANNOT SAY NO TO YOU!
NO, LITTLE ONE... YOU CANNOT.

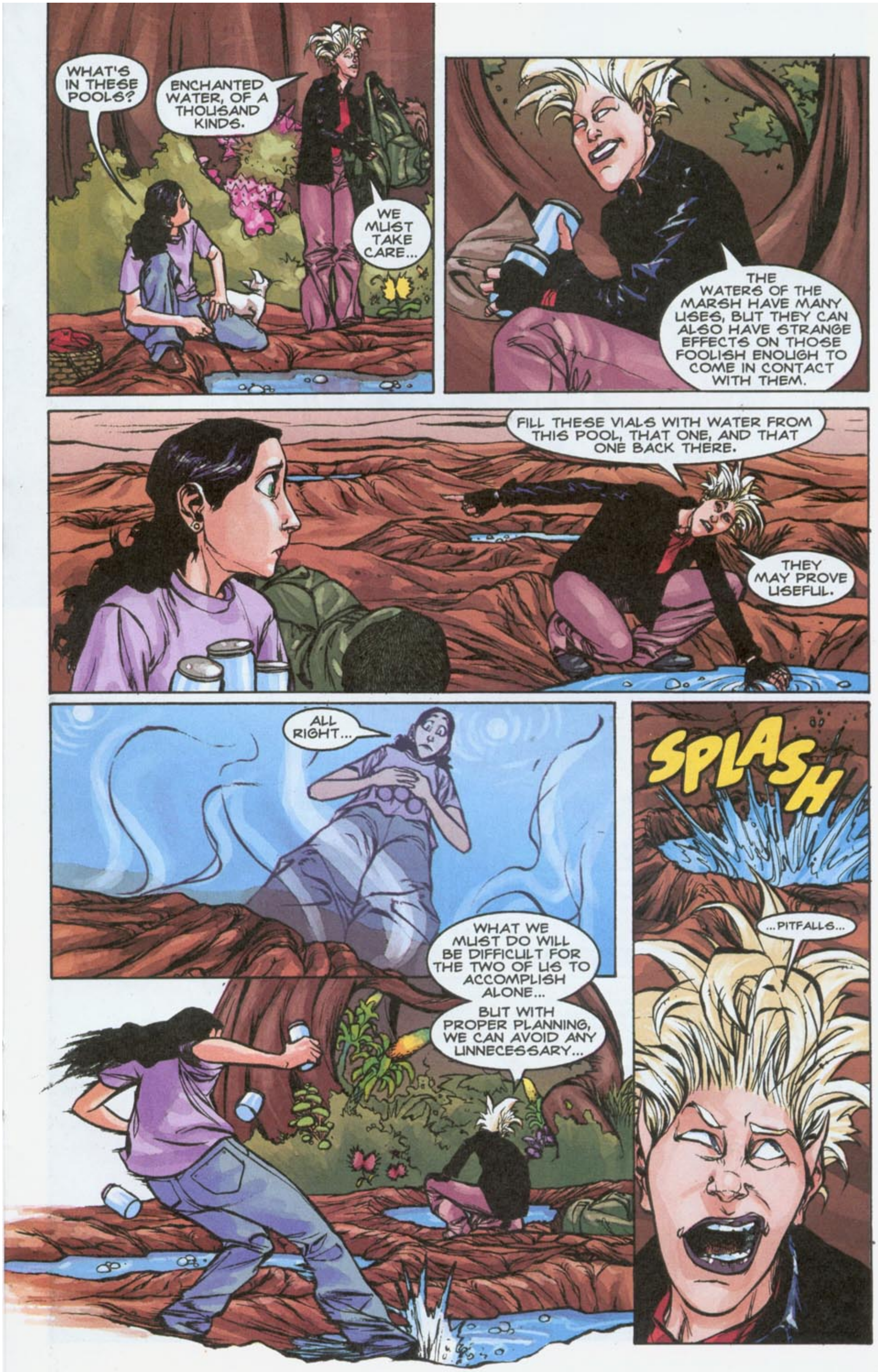

UP NOW, LITTLE PEOPLE.
TIME TO GET UP.

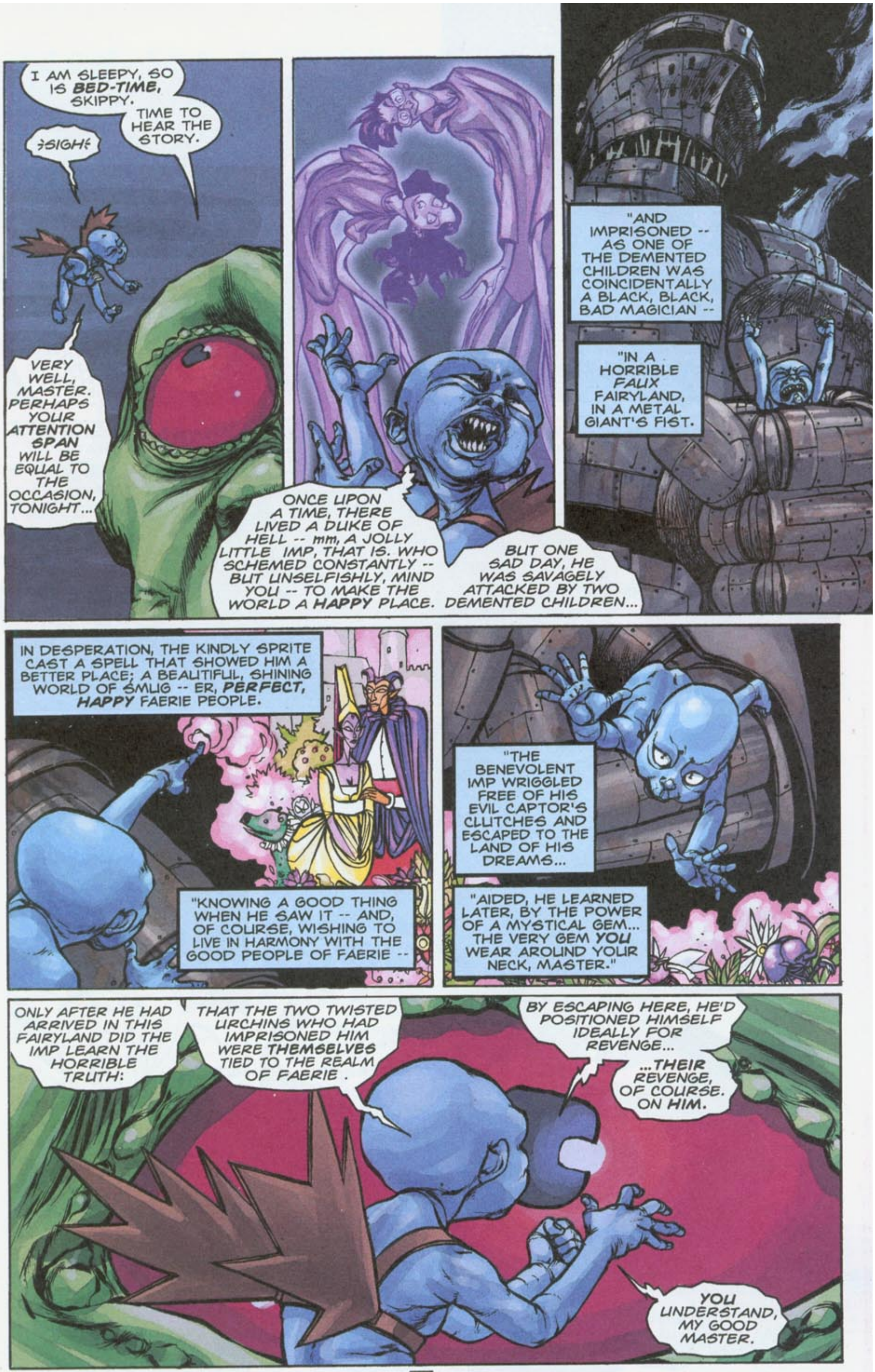


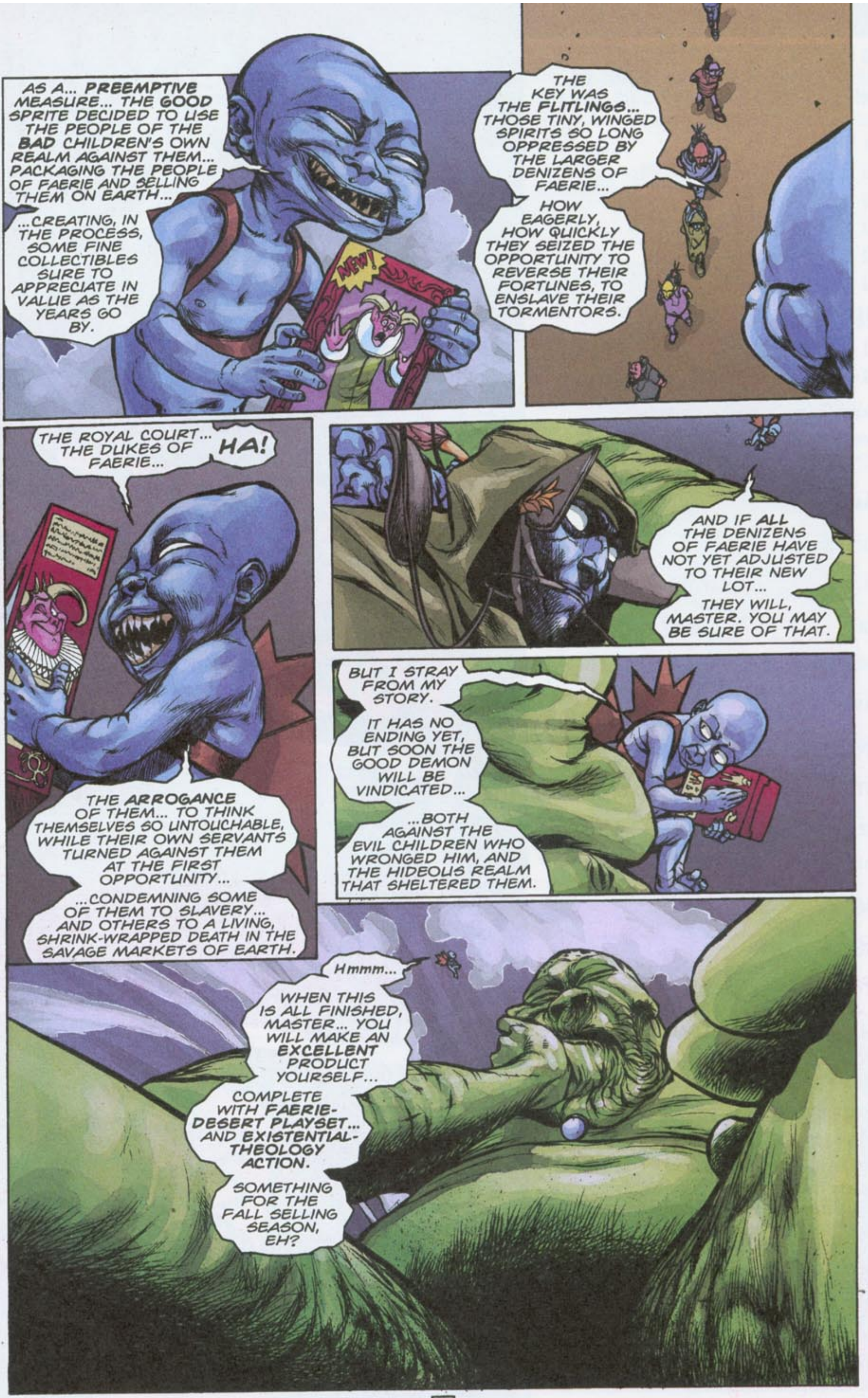
AHEM
SKIPPY --
THE LITTLE PEOPLE JUST **LIE** THERE.
WHAT **HAPPENS** TO THEM?
Ahhh... DEAR MASTER...
YOU HAVE NO **IDEA** HOW **HAPPY** YOU'VE JUST MADE ME.
YOU ARE **HAPPY,** SKIPPY?
DELIRIOUSLY HAPPY.
AT LAST, THE TIME HAS COME TO **INTRODUCE YOU** TO THE **WONDERS** OF **THEOLOGY.**
WHAT **HAPPENS** TO THE LITTLE PEOPLE, YOU ASK?
THERE ARE **SO** MANY FASCINATING THEORIES TO CHOOSE FROM.
SOME SAY THAT **NOTHING** HAPPENS. THAT WHEN VARIOUS TROUBLESOME **PHYSIOLOGICAL PROCESSES** HAVE RUN THEIR COURSE, **"THEY"** SIMPLY **CEASE** TO **EXIST.**
SOME SAY THAT **"THEY"** GO TO A BETTER PLACE... **OR** A PLACE WHERE **"THEY" DESERVE** TO BE.
AND **SOME** SAY THAT **"THEY"** COME **BACK** HERE, WHERE THEY INHERIT **A NEW** SET OF TROUBLESOME PHYSIOLOGICAL PROCESSES.
BUT...
SKIPPY, WHO IS **RIGHT?**
Ahhh --
THAT'S THE **BEAUTY** OF THEOLOGY, DEAR MASTER!

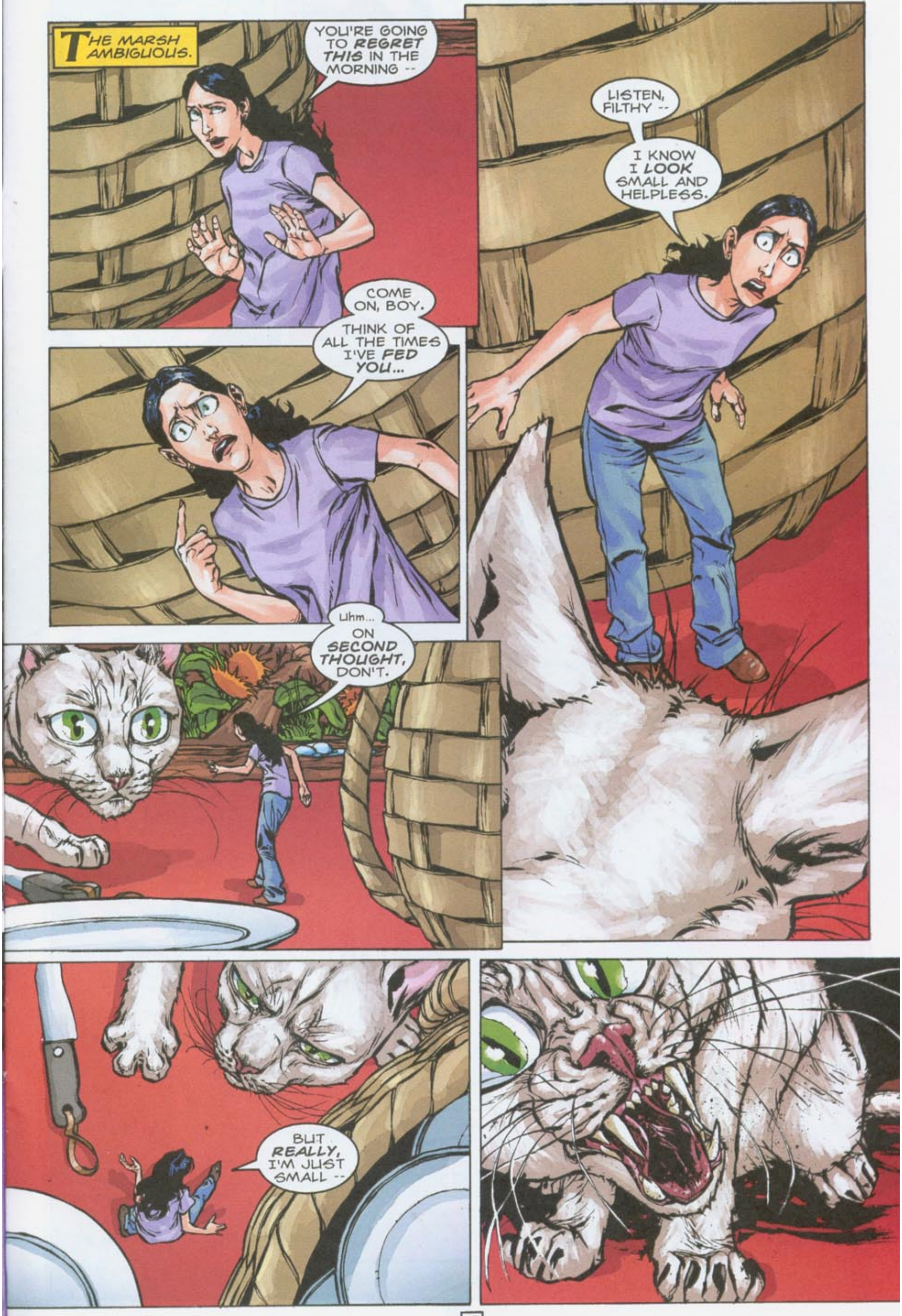

THEY'RE THE ONLY ONES WHO TRULY KNOW WHAT'S BECOME OF THEM...
AND THEY CAN'T TELL YOU.
THE-O-LO-GY.
LISTEN, LITTLE PEOPLE -- YOU ARE DOING IT WRONG.
GET UP!
FIRST TADPOLE, THEN FROG, THEN --
THEN IBBIT.
YOU ARE DOING IT WRONG.

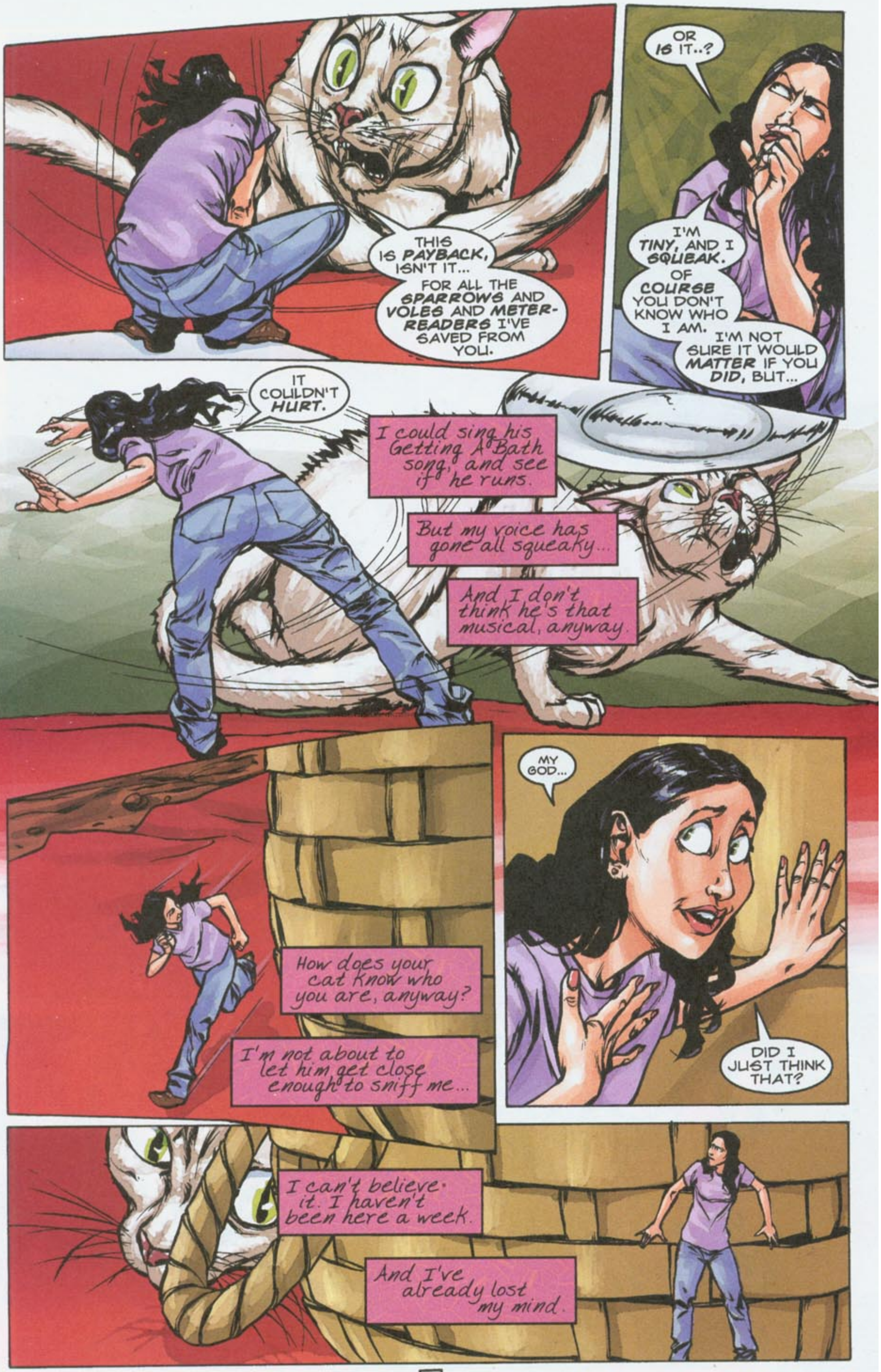

WHY ARE WE *RUNNING?* HE'S GOT *YARROW!*
THE DWARF'S POWER IS *THIS:* WHEN HE POSES A *QUESTION,* YOU *MUST* ANSWER HIM.
AND SHOULD YOU ANSWER 'YES,' YOU ARE HIS SLAVE FOREVER AFTER.
YOU CAN REFUSE THE MONSTER *NOTHING.* HE HAS LAID A *GEAS* UPON YOU.
THEN... WHY DIDN'T WE START RUNNING *BEFORE* HE STARTED TALKING?
OR WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST TELL US TO STICK OUR *FINGERS* IN OUR EARS?
THERE WAS NO *TIME.* AND *TRUST ME,* MOLLY -- HE WOULD HAVE *PURSUED US* UNTIL *ONE* OF US WAS TAKEN.
AND IT IS FAR, FAR BETTER FOR *FAERIE* THAT YARROW WAS TAKEN, RATHER THAN YOU OR I...
SHE WOULD HAVE *SACRIFICED HERSELF* FOR US *WILLINGLY,* GIVEN THE CHOICE... WOULD SHE NOT HAVE?
YES. BUT --
THEN THERE IS NO MORE TO BE SAID. COME.

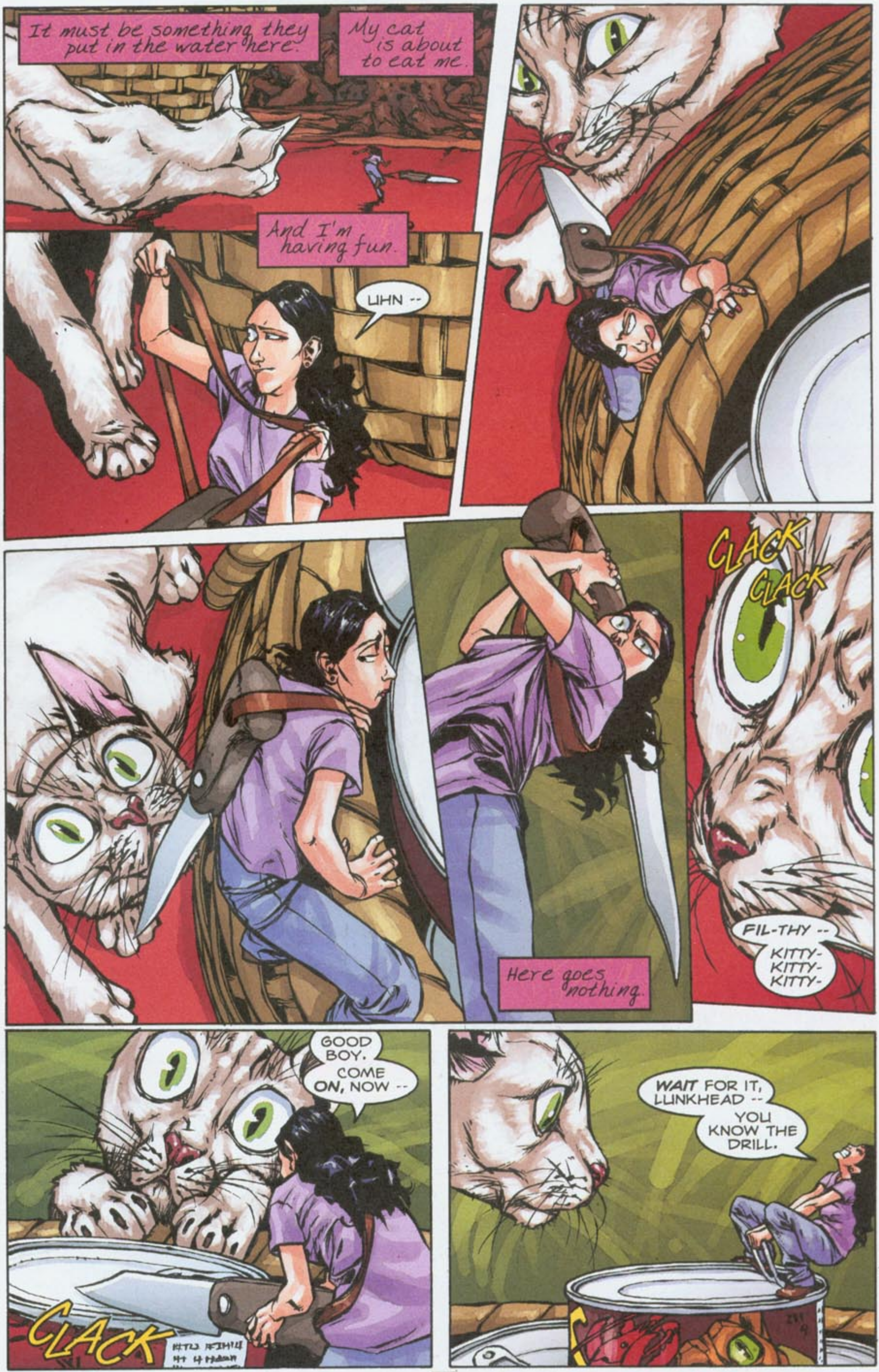

WHAT'S IN THESE POOLS?
ENCHANTED WATER, OF A THOUSAND KINDS.
WE MUST TAKE CARE...
THE WATERS OF THE MARSH HAVE MANY USES, BUT THEY CAN ALSO HAVE STRANGE EFFECTS ON THOSE FOOLISH ENOUGH TO COME IN CONTACT WITH THEM.
FILL THESE VIALS WITH WATER FROM THIS POOL, THAT ONE, AND THAT ONE BACK THERE.
THEY MAY PROVE USEFUL.
ALL RIGHT...
WHAT WE MUST DO WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR THE TWO OF US TO ACCOMPLISH ALONE...
BUT WITH PROPER PLANNING, WE CAN AVOID ANY UNNECESSARY...
SPLASH
...PITFALLS...

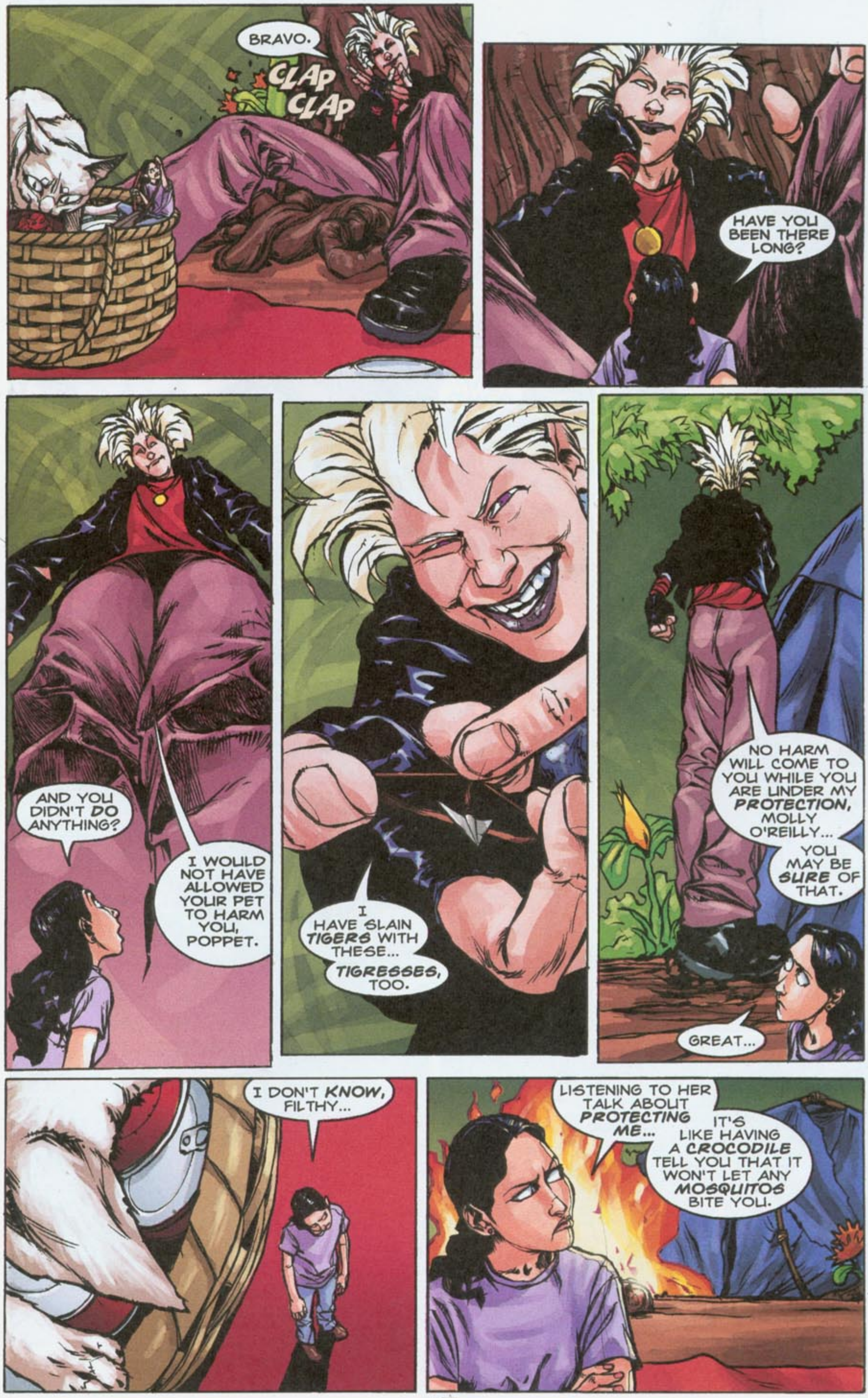

I AM SLEEPY, SO IS **BED-TIME,** SKIPPY.
TIME TO HEAR THE STORY.
⌇SIGH⌇
VERY WELL, MASTER. PERHAPS YOUR **ATTENTION SPAN** WILL BE EQUAL TO THE OCCASION, TONIGHT...
ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE LIVED A DUKE OF HELL -- mm, A JOLLY LITTLE IMP, THAT IS. WHO SCHEMED CONSTANTLY -- BUT UNSELFISHLY, MIND YOU -- TO MAKE THE WORLD A **HAPPY** PLACE.
BUT ONE SAD DAY, HE WAS SAVAGELY ATTACKED BY TWO DEMENTED CHILDREN...
"AND IMPRISONED -- AS ONE OF THE DEMENTED CHILDREN WAS COINCIDENTALLY A BLACK, BLACK, BAD MAGICIAN --
"IN A HORRIBLE *FAUX* FAIRYLAND, IN A METAL GIANT'S FIST.
IN DESPERATION, THE KINDLY SPRITE CAST A SPELL THAT SHOWED HIM A BETTER PLACE: A BEAUTIFUL, SHINING WORLD OF SMUG -- ER, **PERFECT, HAPPY** FAERIE PEOPLE.
"KNOWING A GOOD THING WHEN HE SAW IT -- AND, OF COURSE, WISHING TO LIVE IN HARMONY WITH THE GOOD PEOPLE OF FAERIE --
"THE BENEVOLENT IMP WRIGGLED FREE OF HIS EVIL CAPTOR'S CLUTCHES AND ESCAPED TO THE LAND OF HIS DREAMS...
"AIDED, HE LEARNED LATER, BY THE POWER OF A MYSTICAL GEM... THE VERY GEM **YOU** WEAR AROUND YOUR NECK, MASTER."
ONLY AFTER HE HAD ARRIVED IN THIS FAIRYLAND DID THE IMP LEARN THE HORRIBLE TRUTH:
THAT THE TWO TWISTED URCHINS WHO HAD IMPRISONED HIM WERE **THEMSELVES** TIED TO THE REALM OF FAERIE .
BY ESCAPING HERE, HE'D POSITIONED HIMSELF IDEALLY FOR REVENGE...
...**THEIR** REVENGE, OF COURSE. ON **HIM.**
YOU UNDERSTAND, MY GOOD MASTER.

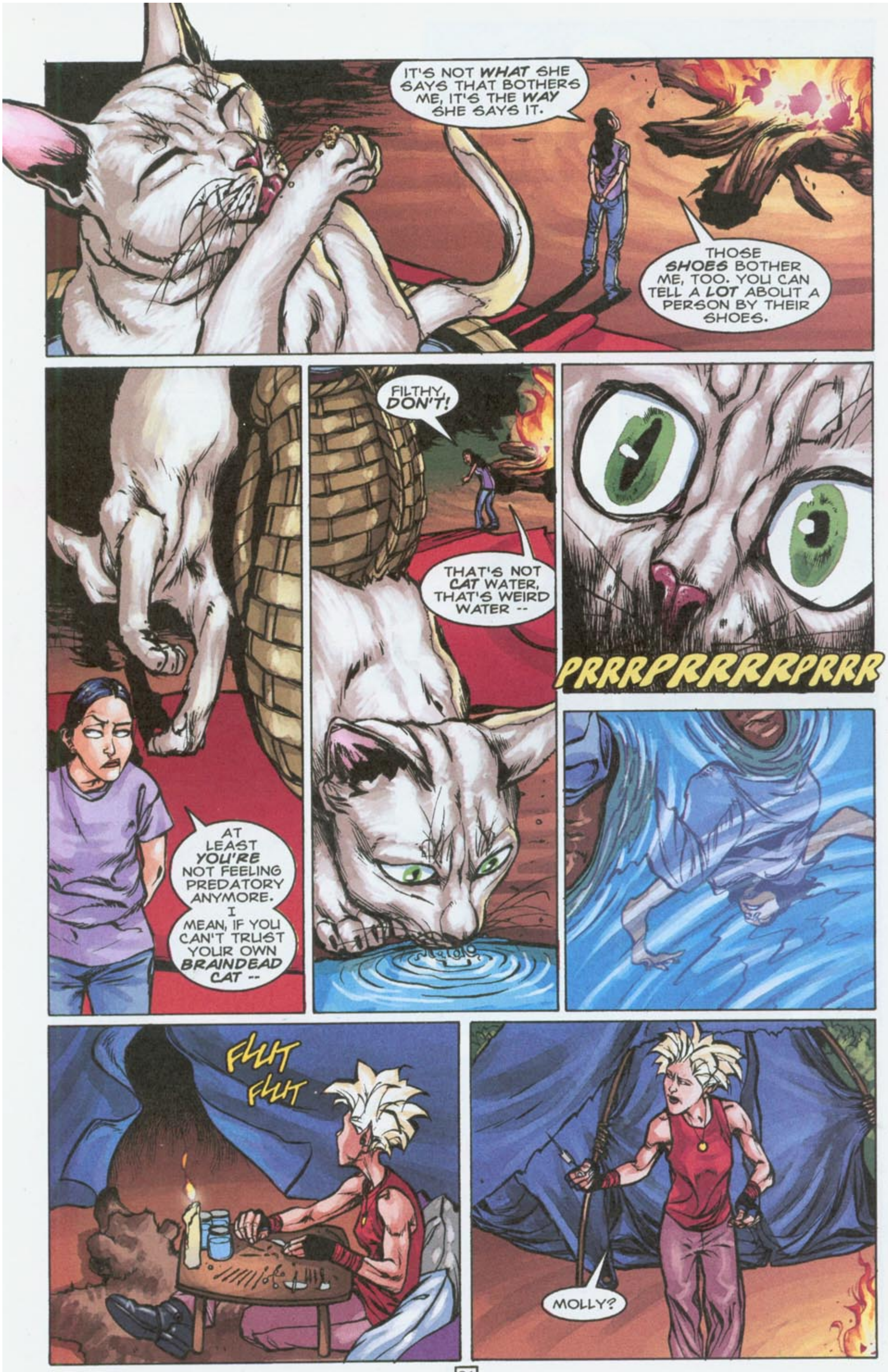

AS A... **PREEMPTIVE** MEASURE... THE **GOOD** SPRITE DECIDED TO USE THE PEOPLE OF THE **BAD** CHILDREN'S OWN REALM AGAINST THEM... PACKAGING THE PEOPLE OF FAERIE AND SELLING THEM ON EARTH...
...CREATING, IN THE PROCESS, SOME FINE COLLECTIBLES SURE TO APPRECIATE IN VALUE AS THE YEARS GO BY.
NEW!
THE KEY WAS THE **FLITLINGS...** THOSE TINY, WINGED SPIRITS SO LONG OPPRESSED BY THE LARGER DENIZENS OF FAERIE...
HOW EAGERLY, HOW QUICKLY THEY SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY TO REVERSE THEIR FORTUNES, TO ENSLAVE THEIR TORMENTORS.
THE ROYAL COURT... THE DUKES OF FAERIE...
HA!
THE **ARROGANCE** OF THEM... TO THINK THEMSELVES SO UNTOUCHABLE, WHILE THEIR OWN SERVANTS TURNED AGAINST THEM AT THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY...
...CONDEMNING SOME OF THEM TO SLAVERY... AND OTHERS TO A LIVING, SHRINK-WRAPPED DEATH IN THE SAVAGE MARKETS OF EARTH.
AND IF **ALL** THE DENIZENS OF FAERIE HAVE NOT YET ADJUSTED TO THEIR NEW LOT...
THEY WILL, MASTER. YOU MAY BE SURE OF THAT.
BUT I STRAY FROM MY STORY.
IT HAS NO ENDING YET, BUT SOON THE GOOD DEMON WILL BE VINDICATED...
...BOTH AGAINST THE EVIL CHILDREN WHO WRONGED HIM, AND THE HIDEOUS REALM THAT SHELTERED THEM.
Hmmm...
WHEN THIS IS ALL FINISHED, MASTER... YOU WILL MAKE AN **EXCELLENT** PRODUCT YOURSELF...
COMPLETE WITH **FAERIE-DESERT PLAYSET...** AND **EXISTENTIAL-THEOLOGY ACTION.**
SOMETHING FOR THE FALL SELLING SEASON, EH?

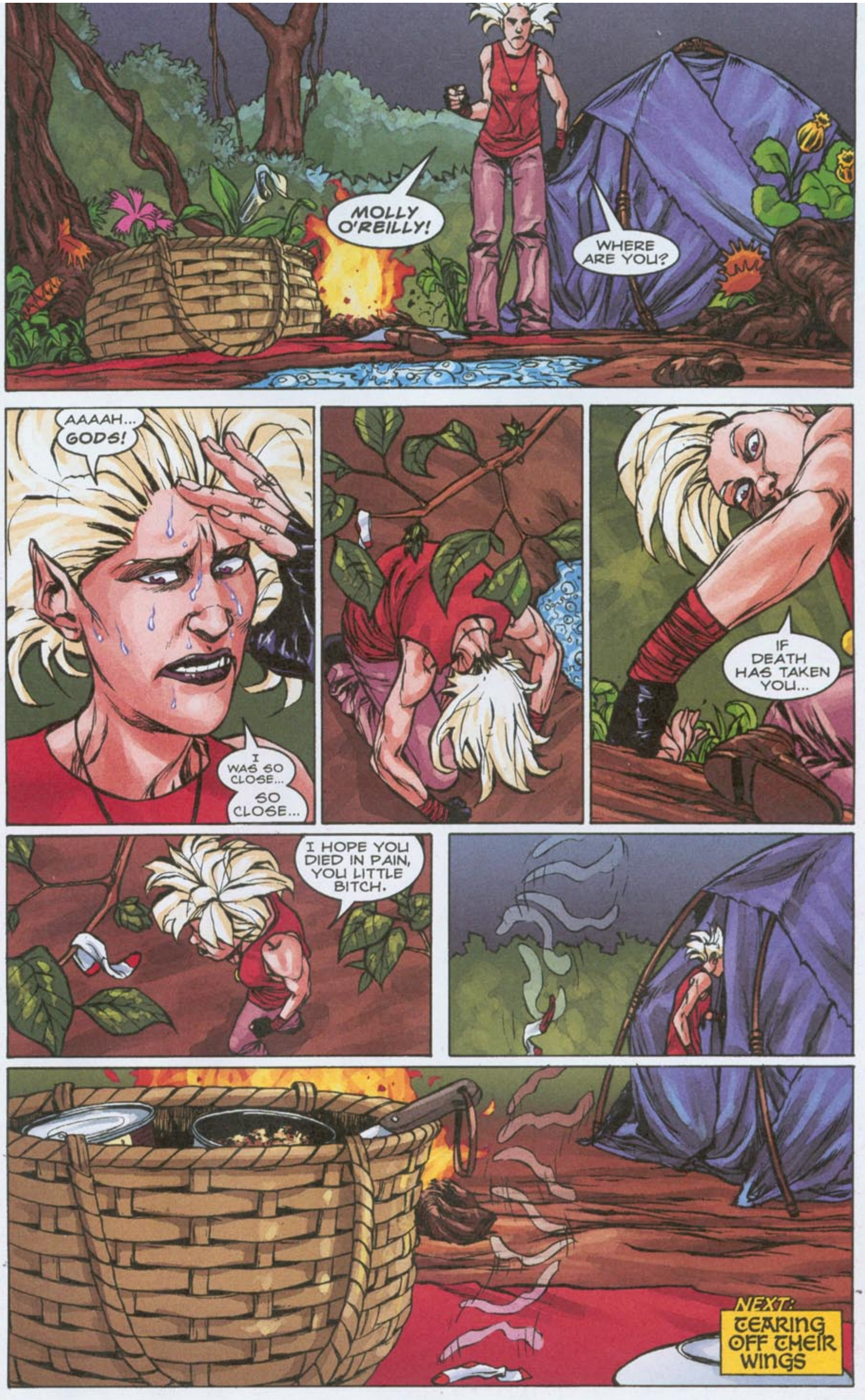

THE MARSH AMBIGUOUS.
YOU'RE GOING TO REGRET THIS IN THE MORNING --
COME ON, BOY.
THINK OF ALL THE TIMES I'VE FED YOU...
LISTEN, FILTHY --
I KNOW I LOOK SMALL AND HELPLESS.
Uhm... ON SECOND THOUGHT, DON'T.
BUT REALLY, I'M JUST SMALL --

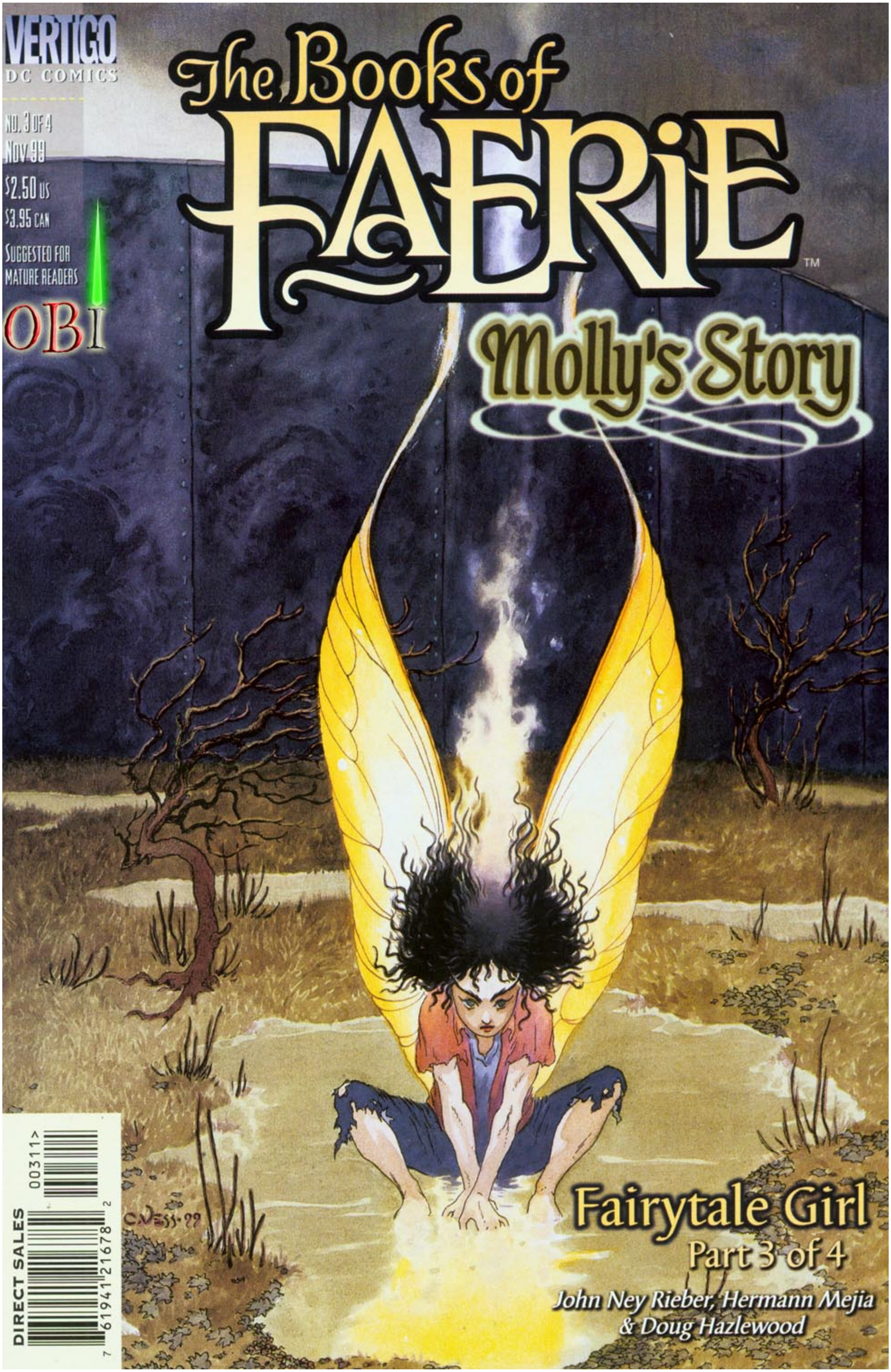

THIS IS PAYBACK, ISN'T IT... FOR ALL THE SPARROWS AND VOLES AND METER-READERS I'VE SAVED FROM YOU.
OR IS IT..?
I'M TINY, AND I SQUEAK. OF COURSE YOU DON'T KNOW WHO I AM.
I'M NOT SURE IT WOULD MATTER IF YOU DID, BUT...
IT COULDN'T HURT.
I could sing his Getting A Bath song, and see if he runs.
But my voice has gone all squeaky...
And I don't think he's that musical, anyway.
How does your cat know who you are, anyway?
I'm not about to let him get close enough to sniff me...
MY GOD...
DID I JUST THINK THAT?
I can't believe it. I haven't been here a week.
And I've already lost my mind.


It must be something they put in the water here.
My cat is about to eat me.
And I'm having fun.
UHN --
CLACK CLACK
Here goes nothing.
FIL-THY --
KITTY-KITTY-KITTY-
GOOD BOY. COME ON, NOW --
CLACK
WAIT FOR IT, LUNKHEAD --
YOU KNOW THE DRILL.


BRAVO.
CLAP CLAP
HAVE YOU BEEN THERE LONG?
AND YOU DIDN'T *DO* ANYTHING?
I WOULD NOT HAVE ALLOWED YOUR PET TO HARM YOU, POPPET.
I HAVE SLAIN *TIGERS* WITH THESE...
TIGRESSES, TOO.
NO HARM WILL COME TO YOU WHILE YOU ARE UNDER MY *PROTECTION,* MOLLY O'REILLY...
YOU MAY BE *SURE* OF THAT.
GREAT...
I DON'T *KNOW,* FILTHY...
LISTENING TO HER TALK ABOUT *PROTECTING ME...*
IT'S LIKE HAVING A *CROCODILE* TELL YOU THAT IT WON'T LET ANY *MOSQUITOS* BITE YOU.


IT'S NOT WHAT SHE SAYS THAT BOTHERS ME, IT'S THE WAY SHE SAYS IT.
THOSE SHOES BOTHER ME, TOO. YOU CAN TELL A LOT ABOUT A PERSON BY THEIR SHOES.
FILTHY, DON'T!
THAT'S NOT CAT WATER, THAT'S WEIRD WATER --
PRRRPRRRRRPRRR
AT LEAST YOU'RE NOT FEELING PREDATORY ANYMORE.
I MEAN, IF YOU CAN'T TRUST YOUR OWN BRAINDEAD CAT --
FLLIT FLLIT
MOLLY?


MOLLY O'REILLY!
WHERE ARE YOU?
AAAAH... GODS!
I WAS SO CLOSE... SO CLOSE...
IF DEATH HAS TAKEN YOU...
I HOPE YOU DIED IN PAIN, YOU LITTLE BITCH.
NEXT: TEARING OFF THEIR WINGS



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Part 3 of 4

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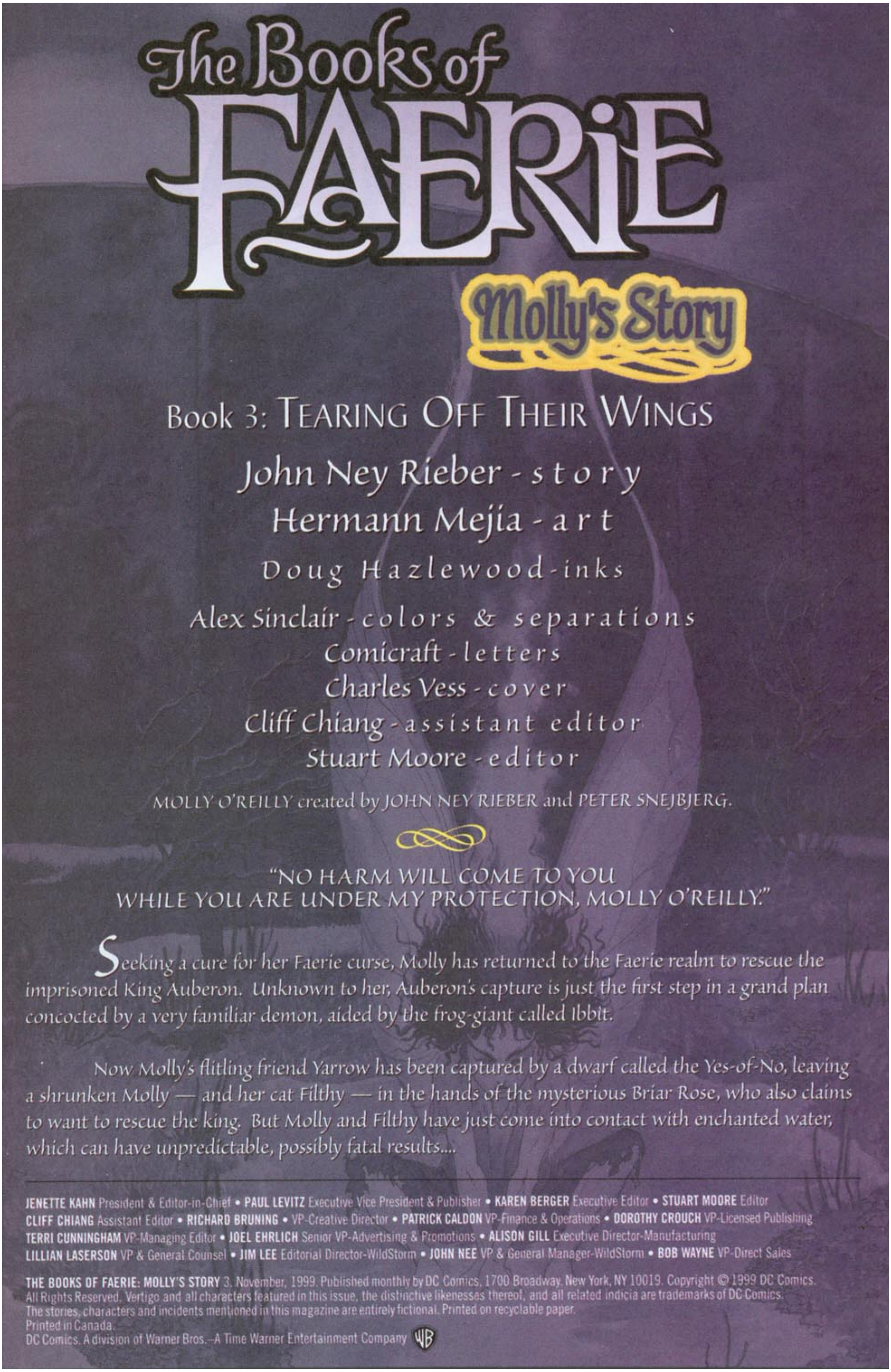

The Books of FAERIE

Molly's Story

Book 3: TEARING OFF THEIR WINGS

John Ney Rieber - story
Hermann Mejia - art
Doug Hazlewood - inks
Alex Sinclair - colors & separations
Comicraft - letters
Charles Vess - cover
Cliff Chiang - assistant editor
Stuart Moore - editor

MOLLY O'REILLY created by JOHN NEY RIEBER and PETER SNEJBJERG.

* * *

"NO HARM WILL COME TO YOU
WHILE YOU ARE UNDER MY PROTECTION, MOLLY O'REILLY."

Seeking a cure for her Faerie curse, Molly has returned to the Faerie realm to rescue the imprisoned King Auberon. Unknown to her, Auberon's capture is just the first step in a grand plan concocted by a very familiar demon, aided by the frog-giant called Ibbit.

Now Molly's flitling friend Yarrow has been captured by a dwarf called the Yes-of-No, leaving a shrunken Molly — and her cat Filthy — in the hands of the mysterious Briar Rose, who also claims to want to rescue the king. But Molly and Filthy have just come into contact with enchanted water, which can have unpredictable, possibly fatal results....

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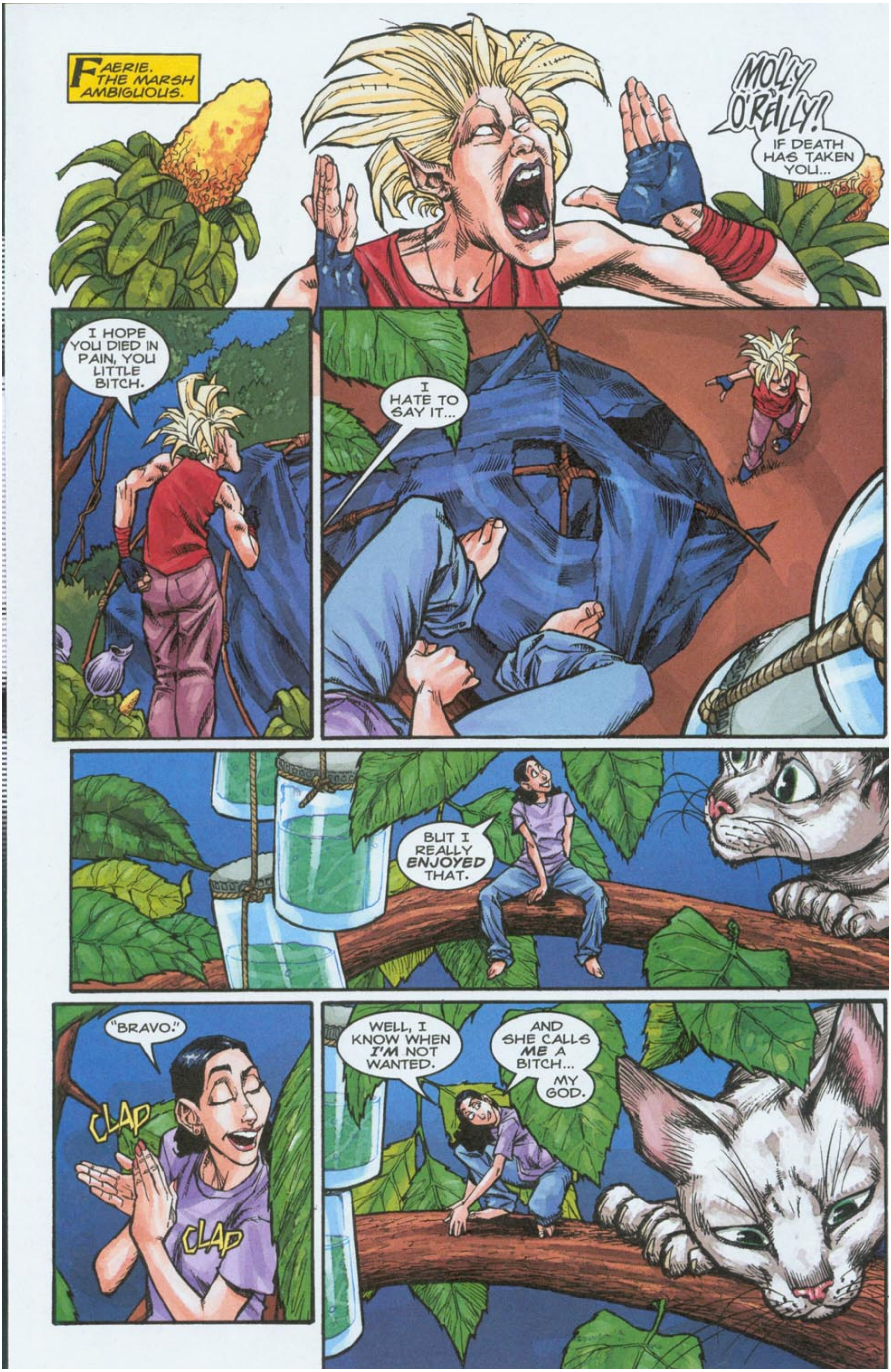
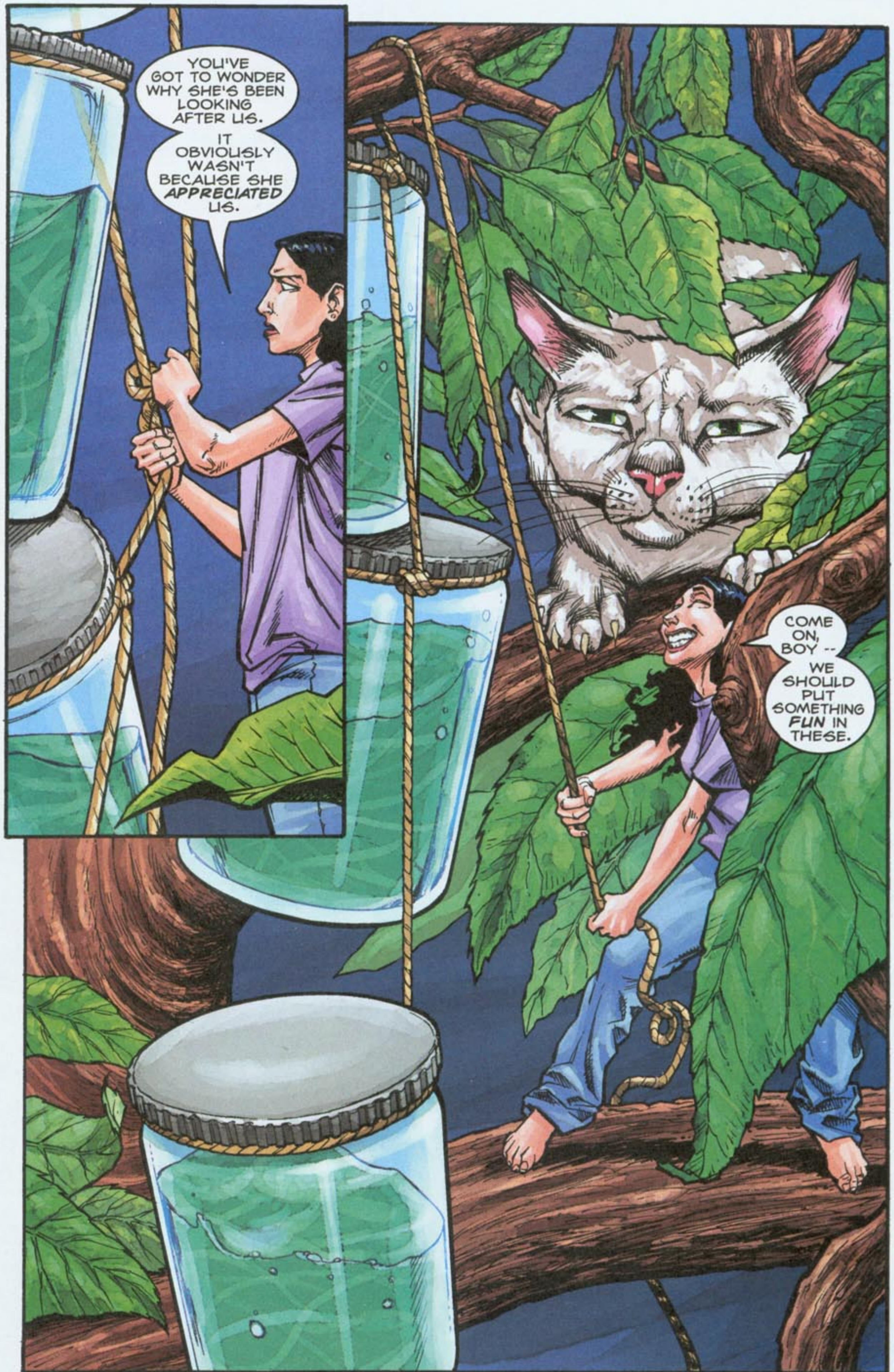
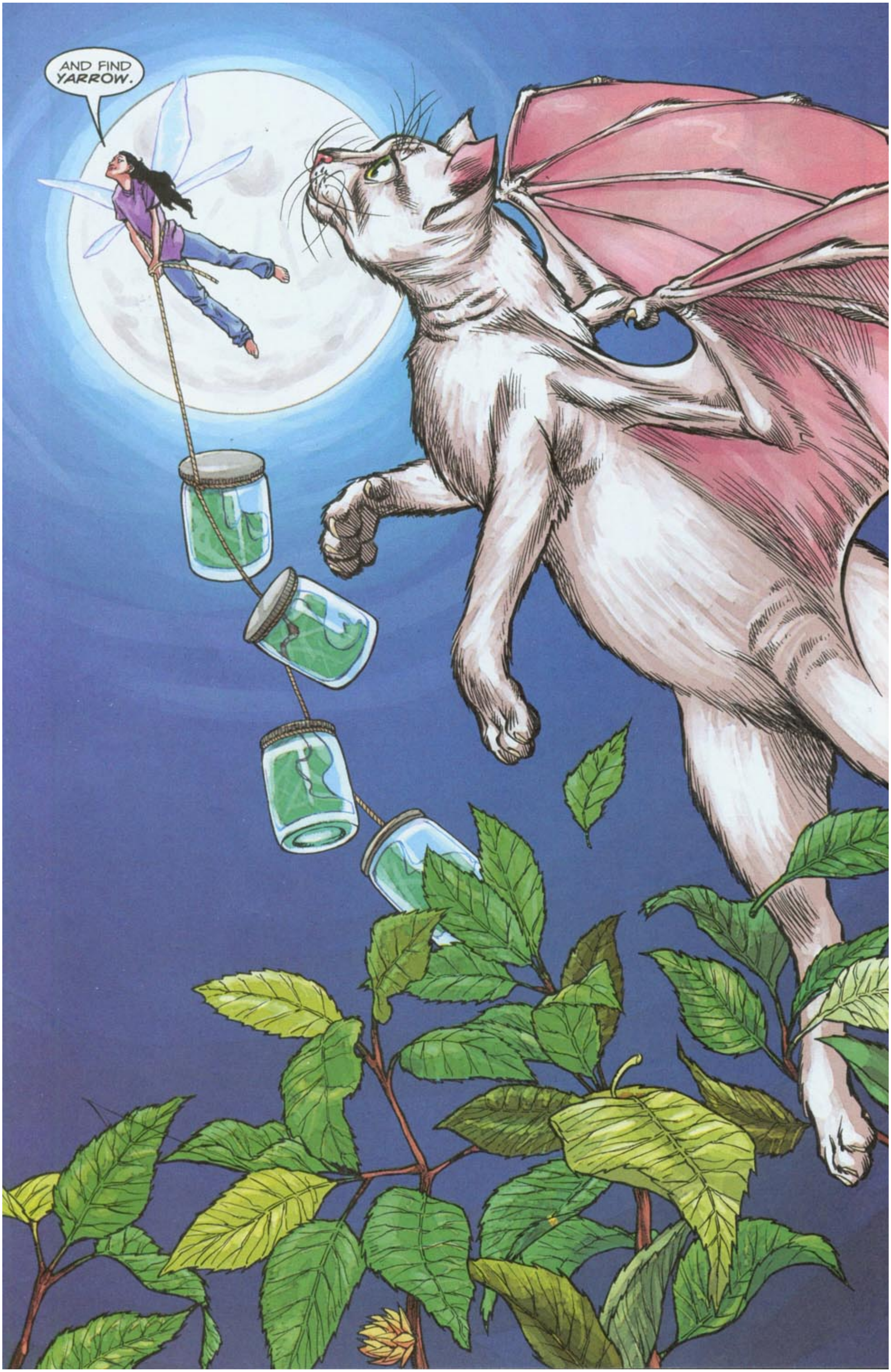
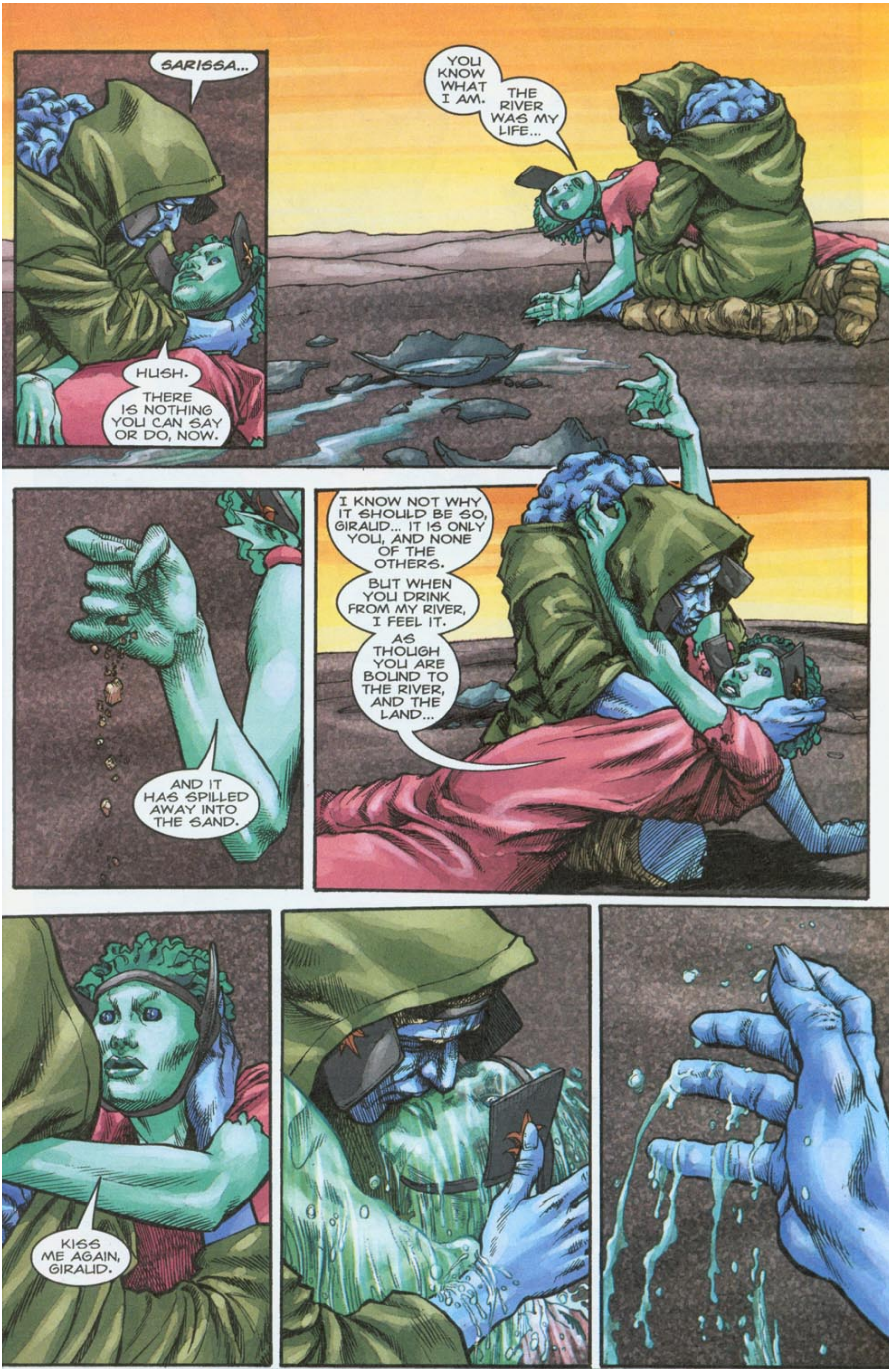
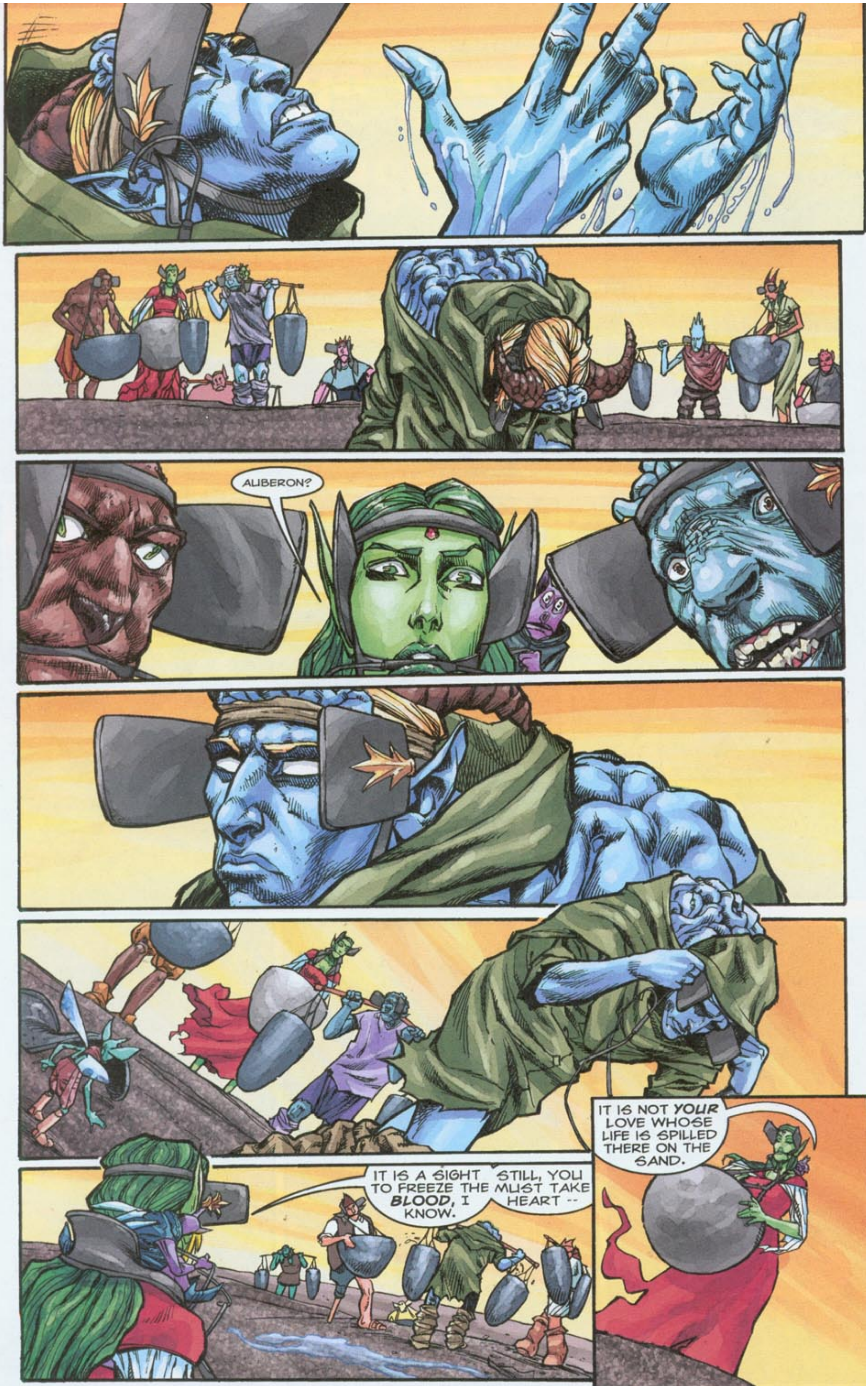
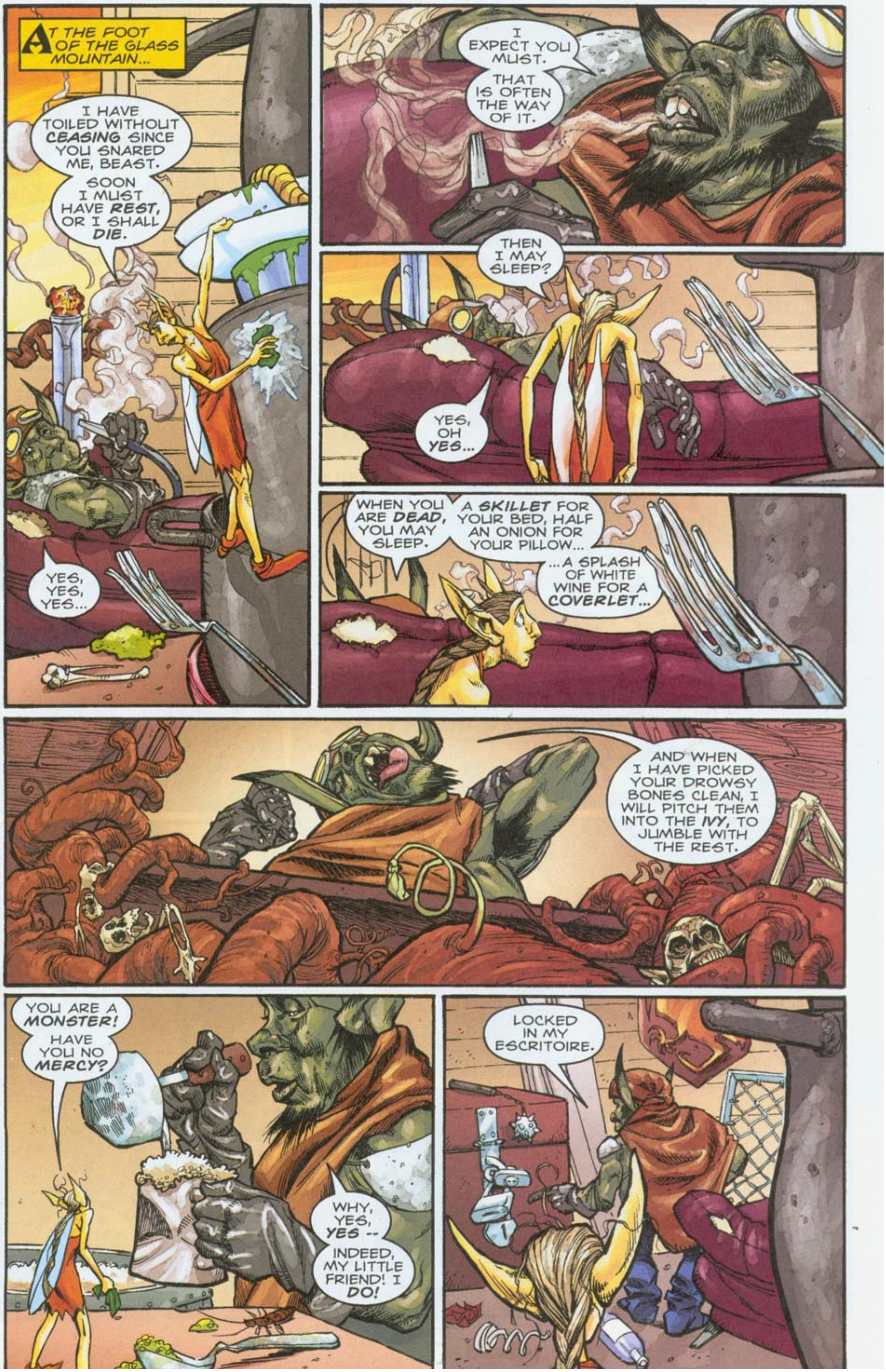

FAERIE. THE MARSH AMBIGUOUS.
MOLLY O'REILLY!
IF DEATH HAS TAKEN YOU...
I HOPE YOU DIED IN PAIN, YOU LITTLE BITCH.
I HATE TO SAY IT...
BUT I REALLY ENJOYED THAT.
"BRAVO."
CLAP
CLAP
WELL, I KNOW WHEN I'M NOT WANTED.
AND SHE CALLS ME A BITCH... MY GOD.

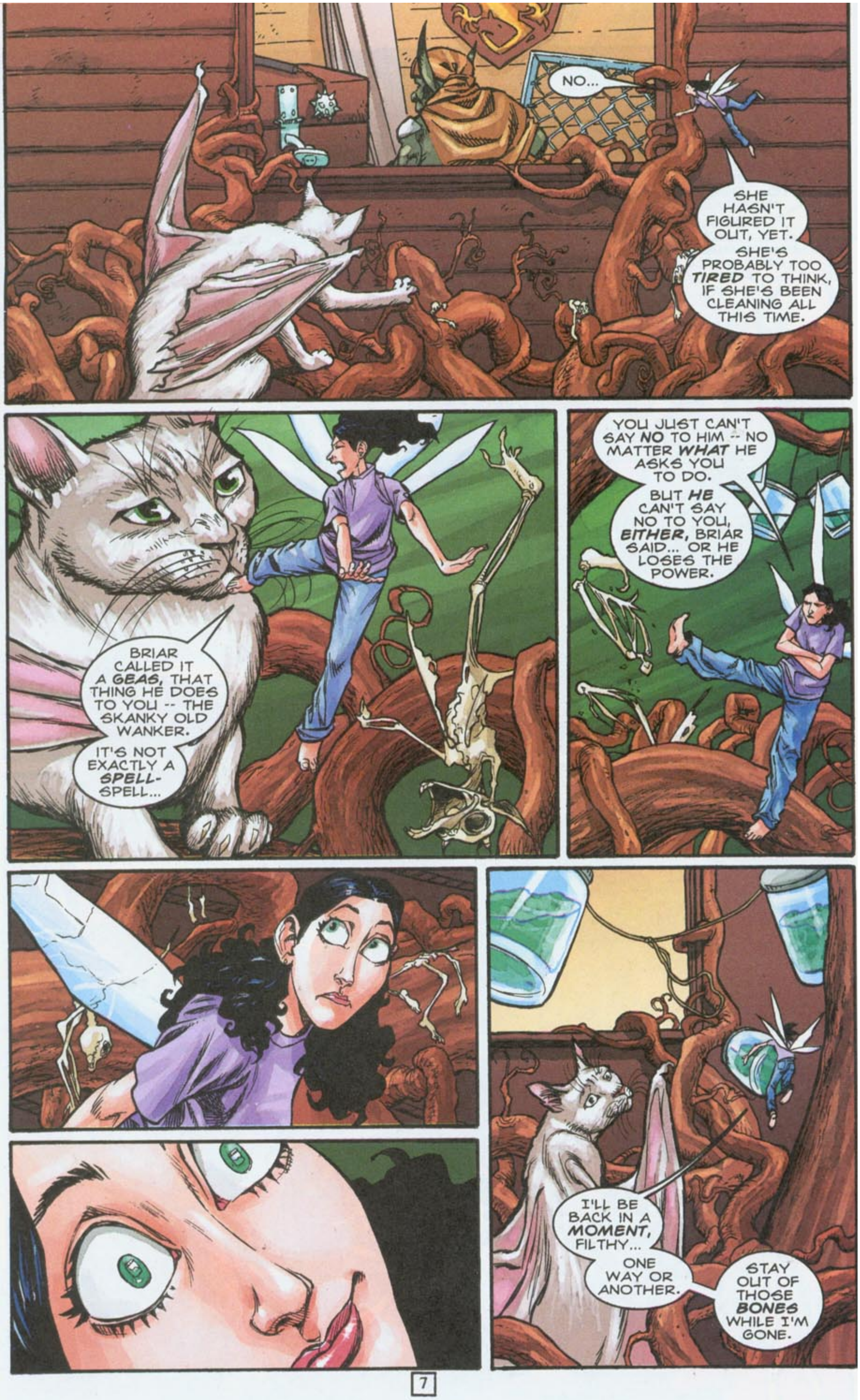

YOU'VE GOT TO WONDER WHY SHE'S BEEN LOOKING AFTER US.
IT OBVIOUSLY WASN'T BECAUSE SHE *APPRECIATED* US.
COME ON, BOY --
WE SHOULD PUT SOMETHING *FUN* IN THESE.

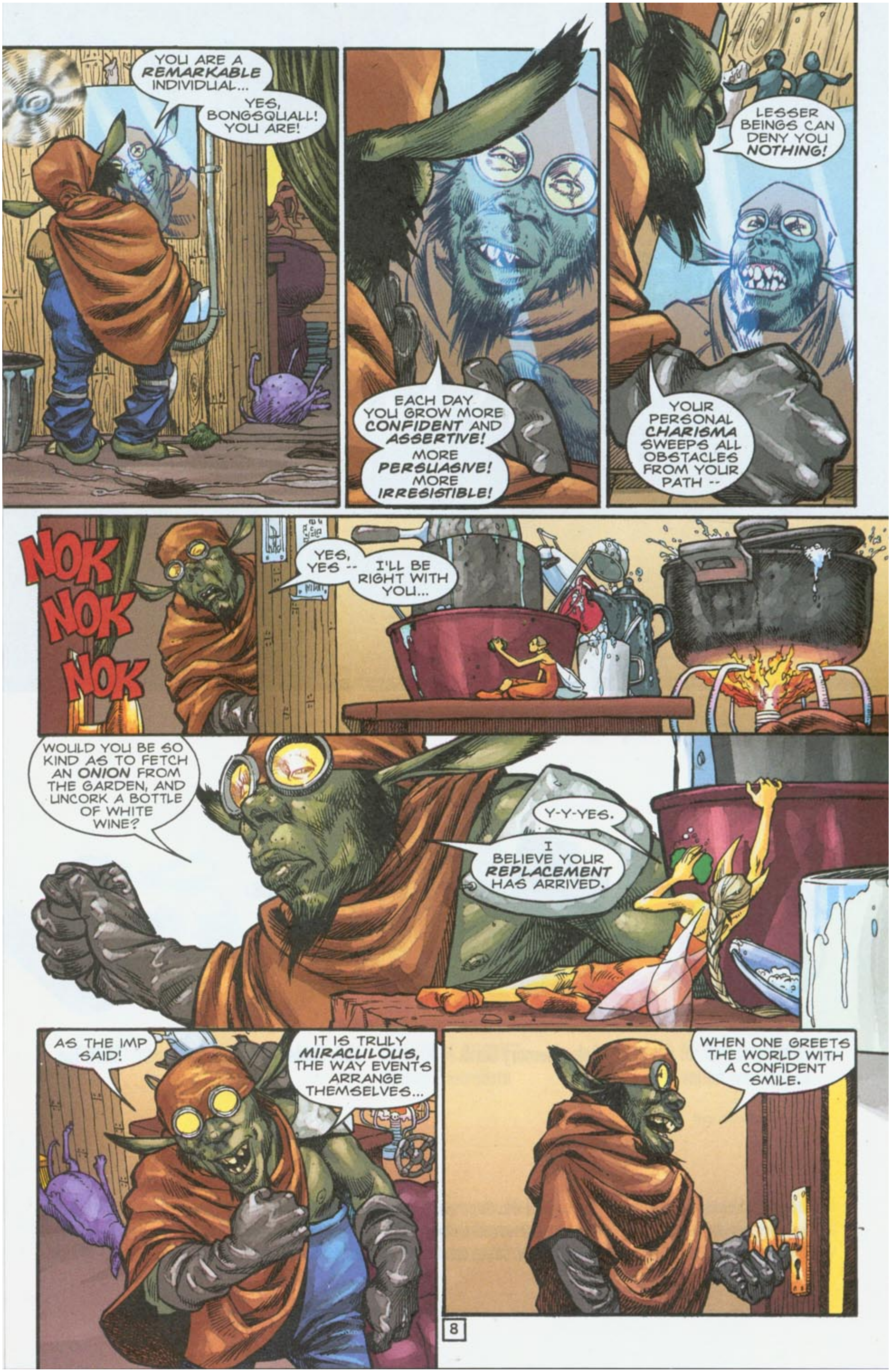

AND FIND *YARROW*.

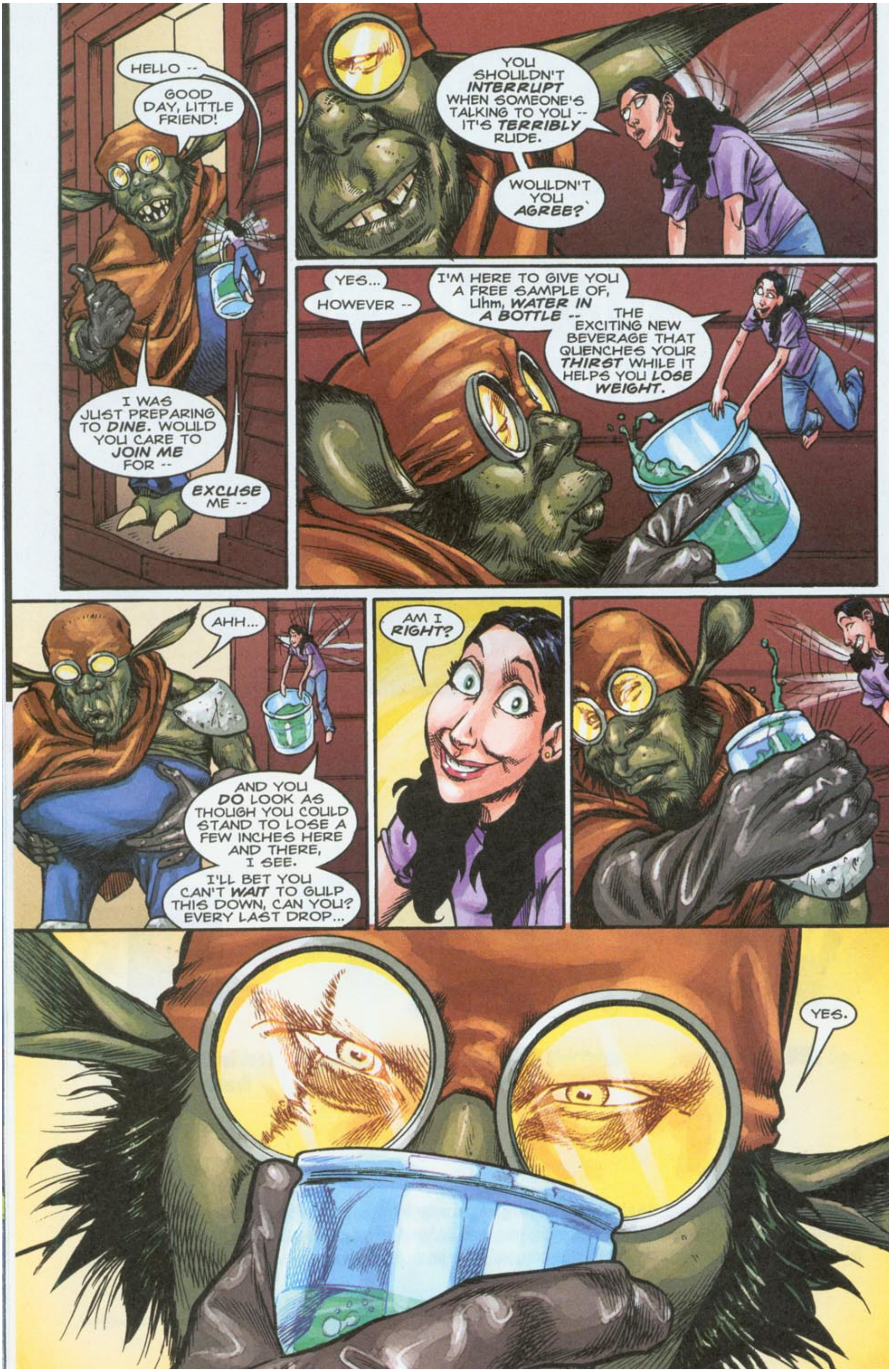

SARISSA...
HUSH. THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN SAY OR DO, NOW.
YOU KNOW WHAT I AM.
THE RIVER WAS MY LIFE...
AND IT HAS SPILLED AWAY INTO THE SAND.
I KNOW NOT WHY IT SHOULD BE SO, GIRAUD... IT IS ONLY YOU, AND NONE OF THE OTHERS.
BUT WHEN YOU DRINK FROM MY RIVER, I FEEL IT.
AS THOUGH YOU ARE BOUND TO THE RIVER, AND THE LAND...
KISS ME AGAIN, GIRAUD.

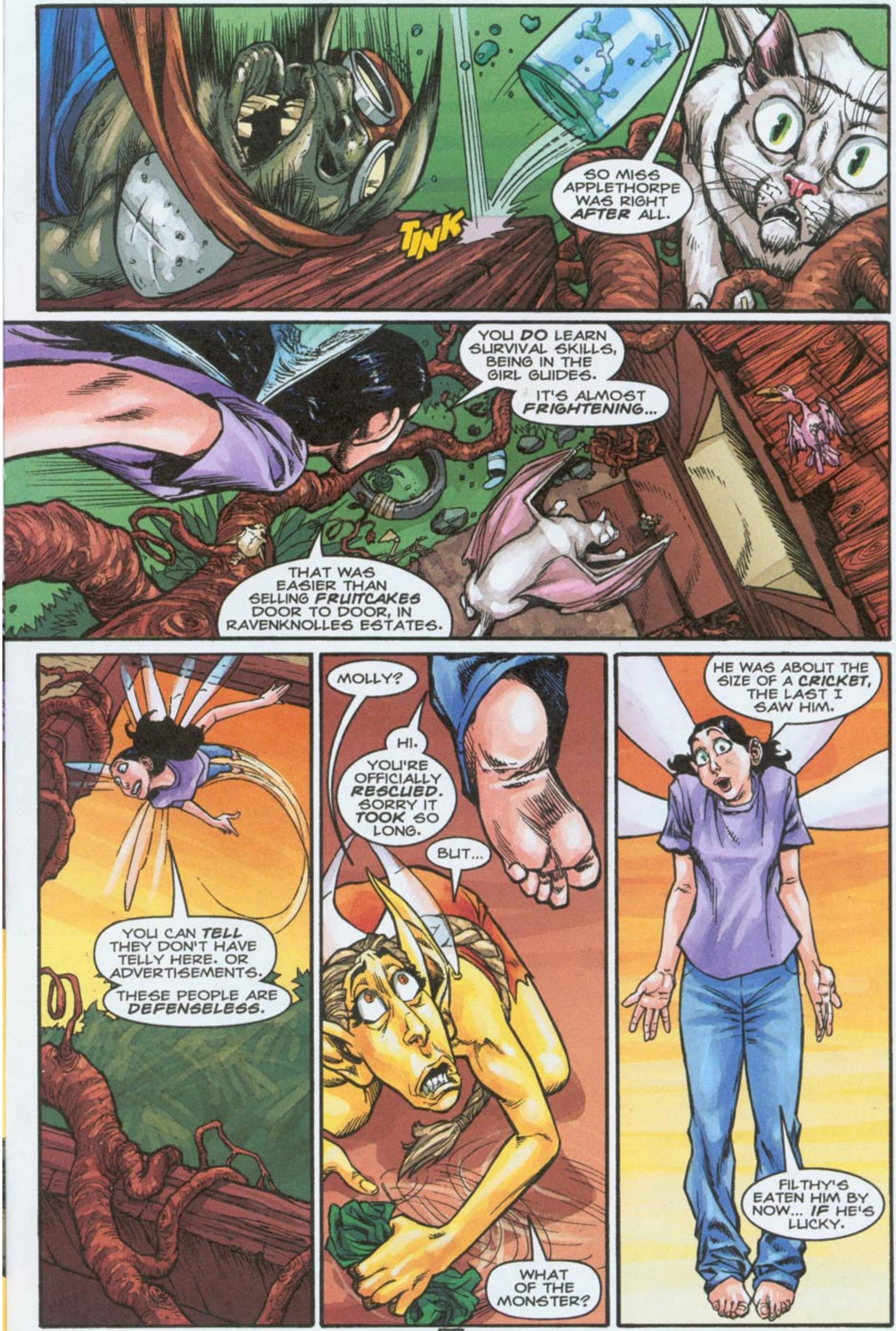

AUBERON?
IT IS A SIGHT TO FREEZE THE *BLOOD*, I KNOW.
STILL, YOU MUST TAKE HEART --
IT IS NOT *YOUR* LOVE WHOSE LIFE IS SPILLED THERE ON THE SAND.

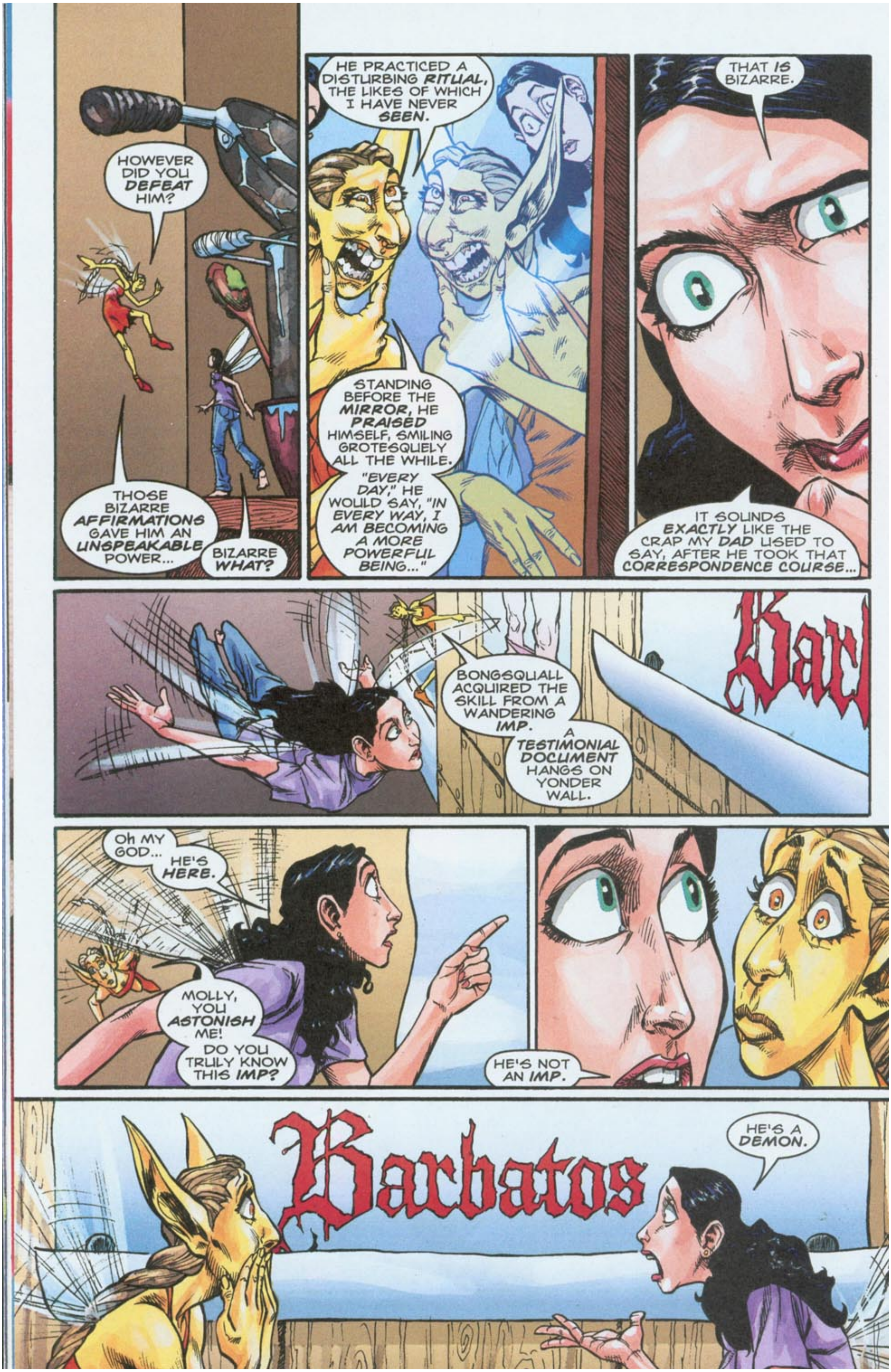

AT THE FOOT OF THE GLASS MOUNTAIN...
I HAVE TOILED WITHOUT CEASING SINCE YOU SNARED ME, BEAST.
SOON I MUST HAVE REST, OR I SHALL DIE.
YES, YES, YES...
I EXPECT YOU MUST.
THAT IS OFTEN THE WAY OF IT.
THEN I MAY SLEEP?
YES, OH YES...
WHEN YOU ARE DEAD, YOU MAY SLEEP.
A SKILLET FOR YOUR BED, HALF AN ONION FOR YOUR PILLOW...
...A SPLASH OF WHITE WINE FOR A COVERLET...
AND WHEN I HAVE PICKED YOUR DROWSY BONES CLEAN, I WILL PITCH THEM INTO THE IVY, TO JUMBLE WITH THE REST.
YOU ARE A MONSTER! HAVE YOU NO MERCY?
WHY, YES, YES --
INDEED, MY LITTLE FRIEND! I DO!
LOCKED IN MY ESCRITOIRE.

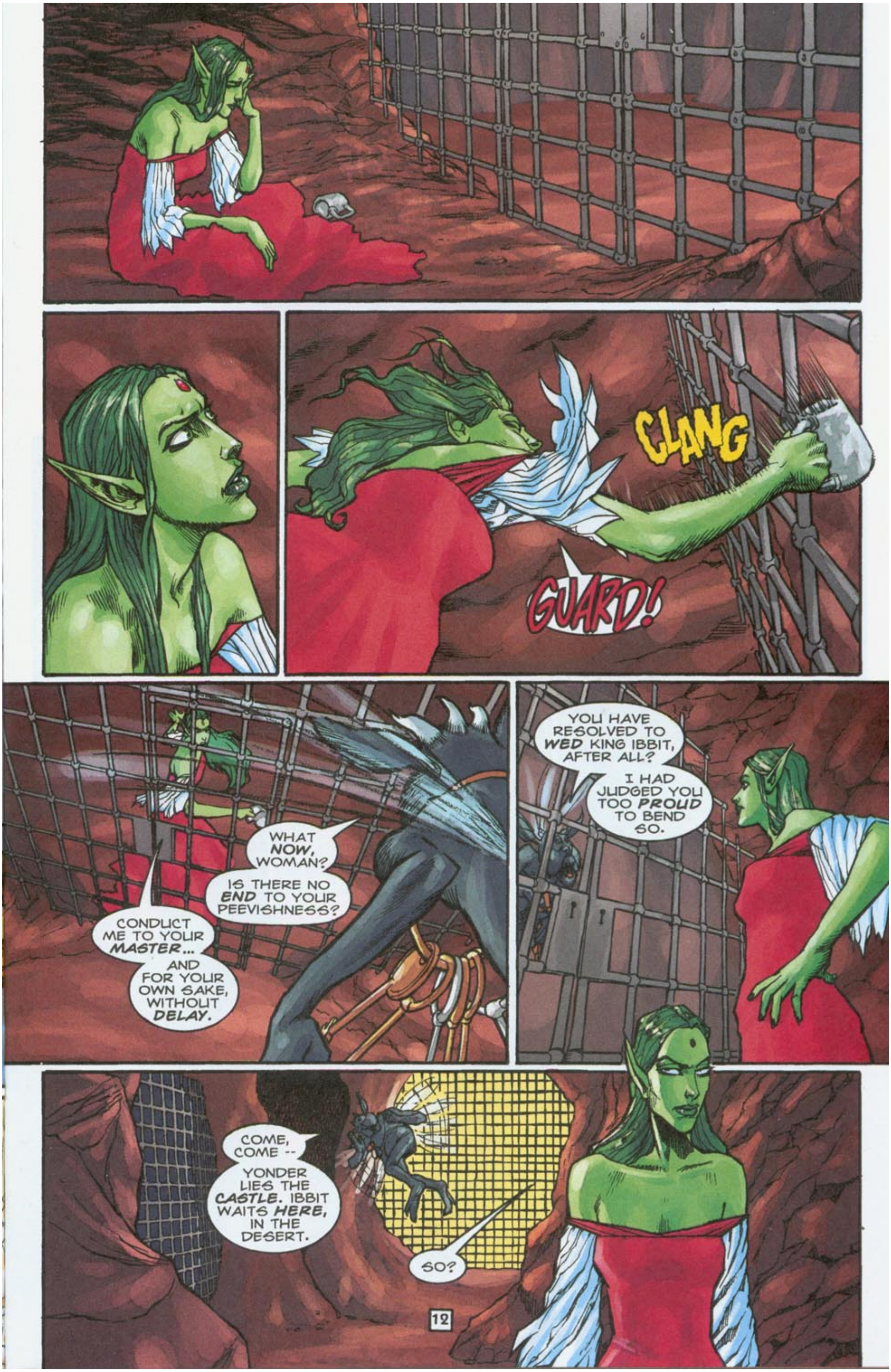

NO...
SHE HASN'T FIGURED IT OUT, YET.
SHE'S PROBABLY TOO *TIRED* TO THINK, IF SHE'S BEEN CLEANING ALL THIS TIME.
BRIAR CALLED IT A *GEAS*, THAT THING HE DOES TO YOU -- THE SKANKY OLD WANKER.
IT'S NOT EXACTLY A *SPELL*-SPELL...
YOU JUST CAN'T SAY *NO* TO HIM -- NO MATTER *WHAT* HE ASKS YOU TO DO.
BUT *HE* CAN'T SAY NO TO YOU, *EITHER*, BRIAR SAID... OR HE LOSES THE POWER.
I'LL BE BACK IN A *MOMENT*, FILTHY...
ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.
STAY OUT OF THOSE *BONES* WHILE I'M GONE.

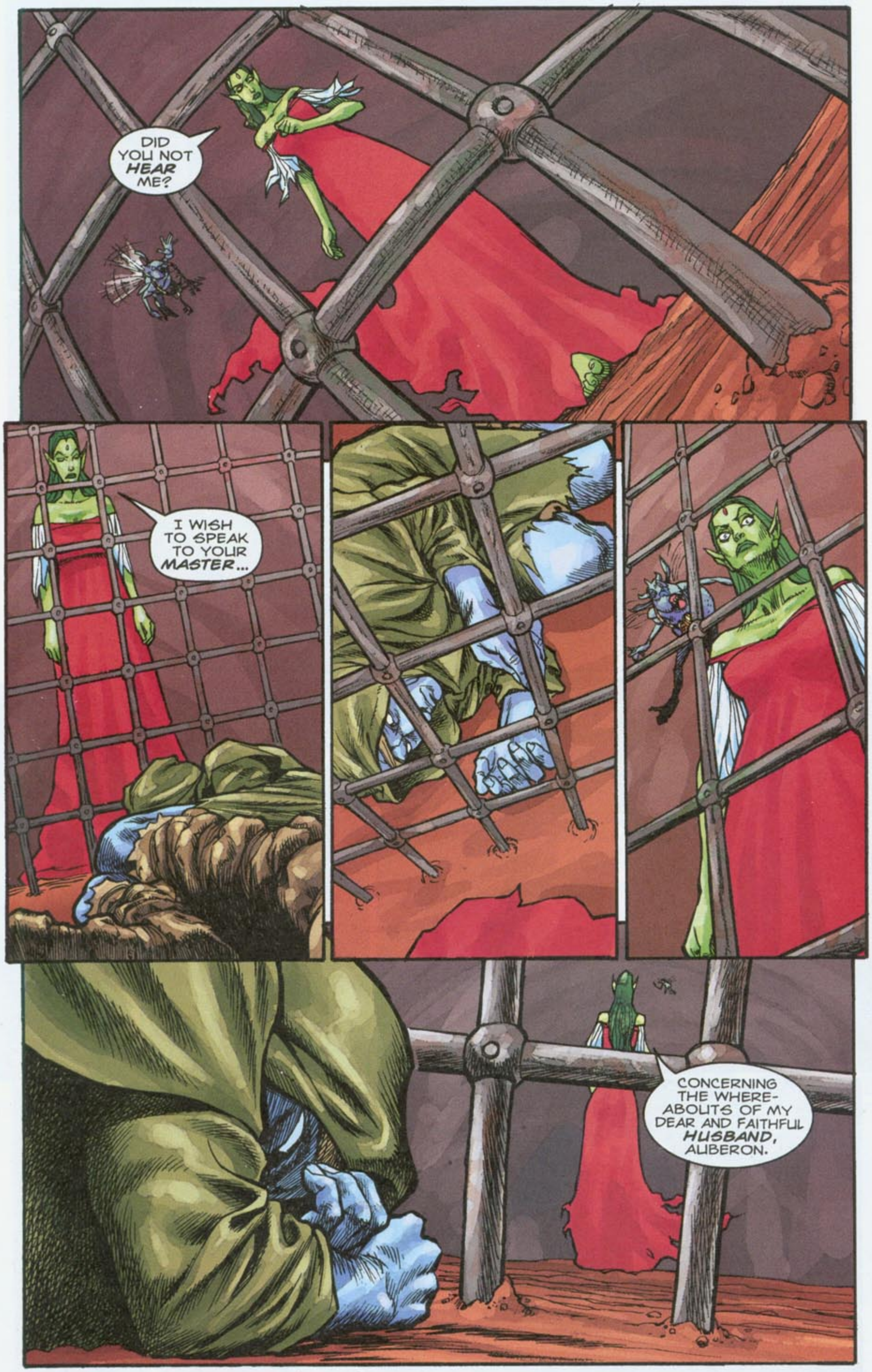

YOU ARE A **REMARKABLE** INDIVIDUAL...
YES, BONGSQUALL! YOU ARE!
EACH DAY YOU GROW MORE **CONFIDENT** AND **ASSERTIVE!** MORE **PERSUASIVE!** MORE **IRRESISTIBLE!**
LESSER BEINGS CAN DENY YOU **NOTHING!**
YOUR PERSONAL **CHARISMA** SWEEPS ALL OBSTACLES FROM YOUR PATH --
NOK NOK NOK
YES, YES -- I'LL BE RIGHT WITH YOU...
WOULD YOU BE SO KIND AS TO FETCH AN **ONION** FROM THE GARDEN, AND UNCORK A BOTTLE OF WHITE WINE?
Y-Y-YES.
I BELIEVE YOUR **REPLACEMENT** HAS ARRIVED.
AS THE IMP SAID!
IT IS TRULY **MIRACULOUS,** THE WAY EVENTS ARRANGE THEMSELVES...
WHEN ONE GREETS THE WORLD WITH A CONFIDENT SMILE.

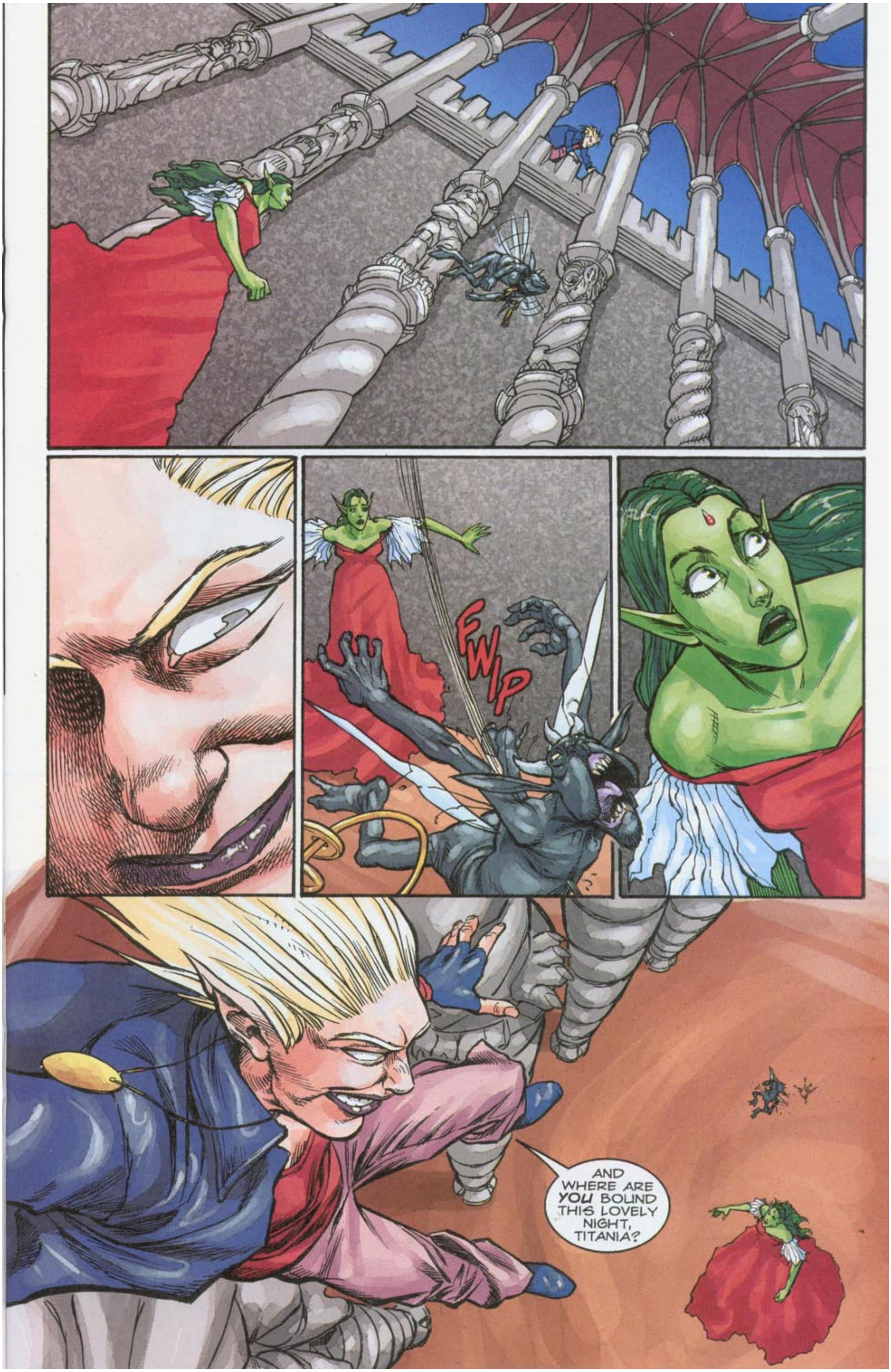

HELLO --
GOOD DAY, LITTLE FRIEND!
I WAS JUST PREPARING TO DINE. WOULD YOU CARE TO JOIN ME FOR --
EXCUSE ME --
YOU SHOULDN'T INTERRUPT WHEN SOMEONE'S TALKING TO YOU -- IT'S TERRIBLY RUDE.
WOULDN'T YOU AGREE?
YES... HOWEVER --
I'M HERE TO GIVE YOU A FREE SAMPLE OF, Uhm, WATER IN A BOTTLE -- THE EXCITING NEW BEVERAGE THAT QUENCHES YOUR THIRST WHILE IT HELPS YOU LOSE WEIGHT.
AHH...
AND YOU DO LOOK AS THOUGH YOU COULD STAND TO LOSE A FEW INCHES HERE AND THERE, I SEE.
I'LL BET YOU CAN'T WAIT TO GULP THIS DOWN, CAN YOU? EVERY LAST DROP...
AM I RIGHT?
YES.

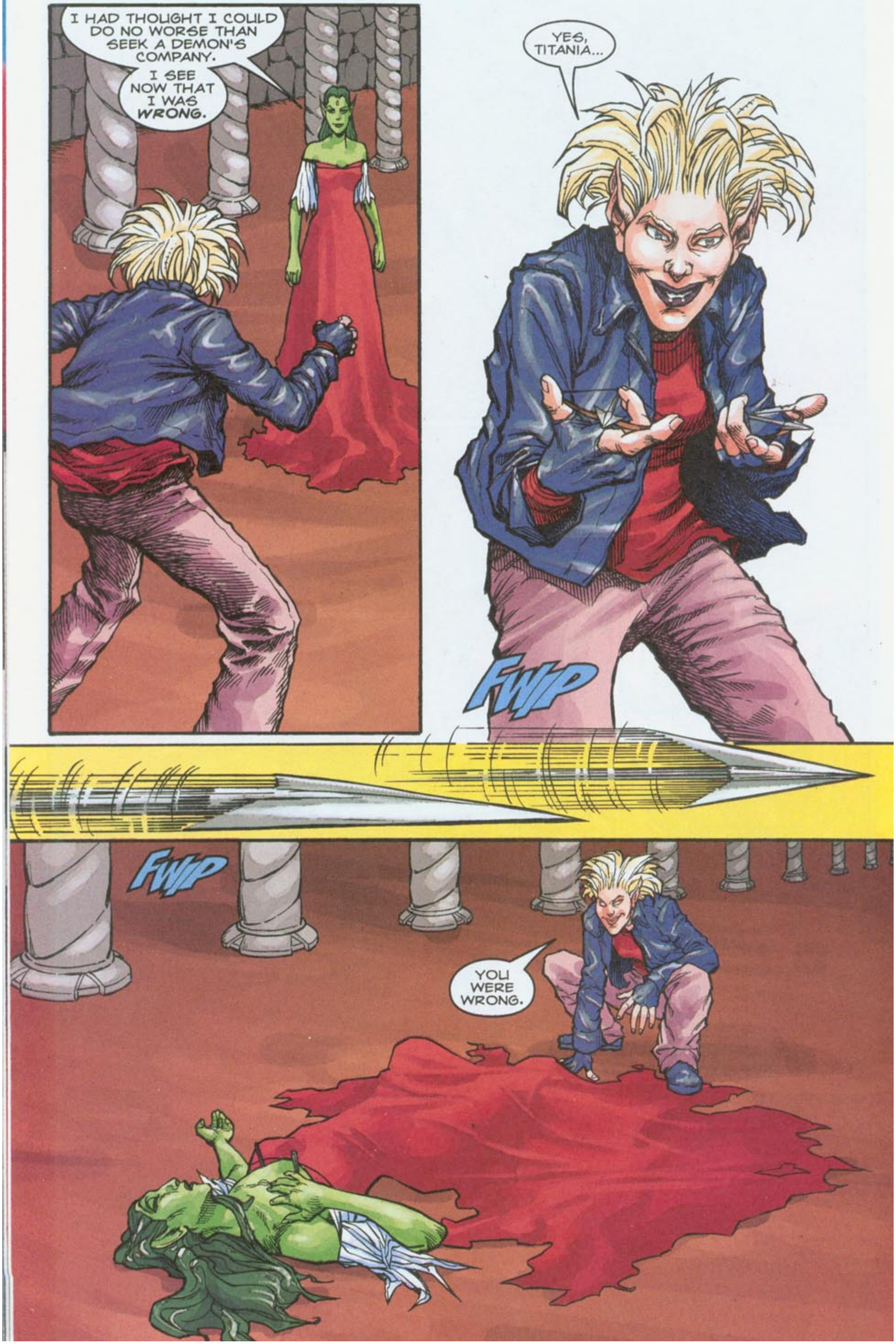

TINK
SO MISS APPLETHORPE WAS RIGHT *AFTER* ALL.
YOU *DO* LEARN SURVIVAL SKILLS, BEING IN THE GIRL GUIDES.
IT'S ALMOST *FRIGHTENING*...
THAT WAS EASIER THAN SELLING *FRUITCAKES* DOOR TO DOOR, IN RAVENKNOLLES ESTATES.
YOU CAN *TELL* THEY DON'T HAVE TELLY HERE. OR ADVERTISEMENTS.
THESE PEOPLE ARE *DEFENSELESS*.
MOLLY?
HI.
YOU'RE OFFICIALLY *RESCUED*. SORRY IT *TOOK* SO LONG.
BUT...
WHAT OF THE MONSTER?
HE WAS ABOUT THE SIZE OF A *CRICKET*, THE LAST I SAW HIM.
FILTHY'S EATEN HIM BY NOW... *IF* HE'S LUCKY.

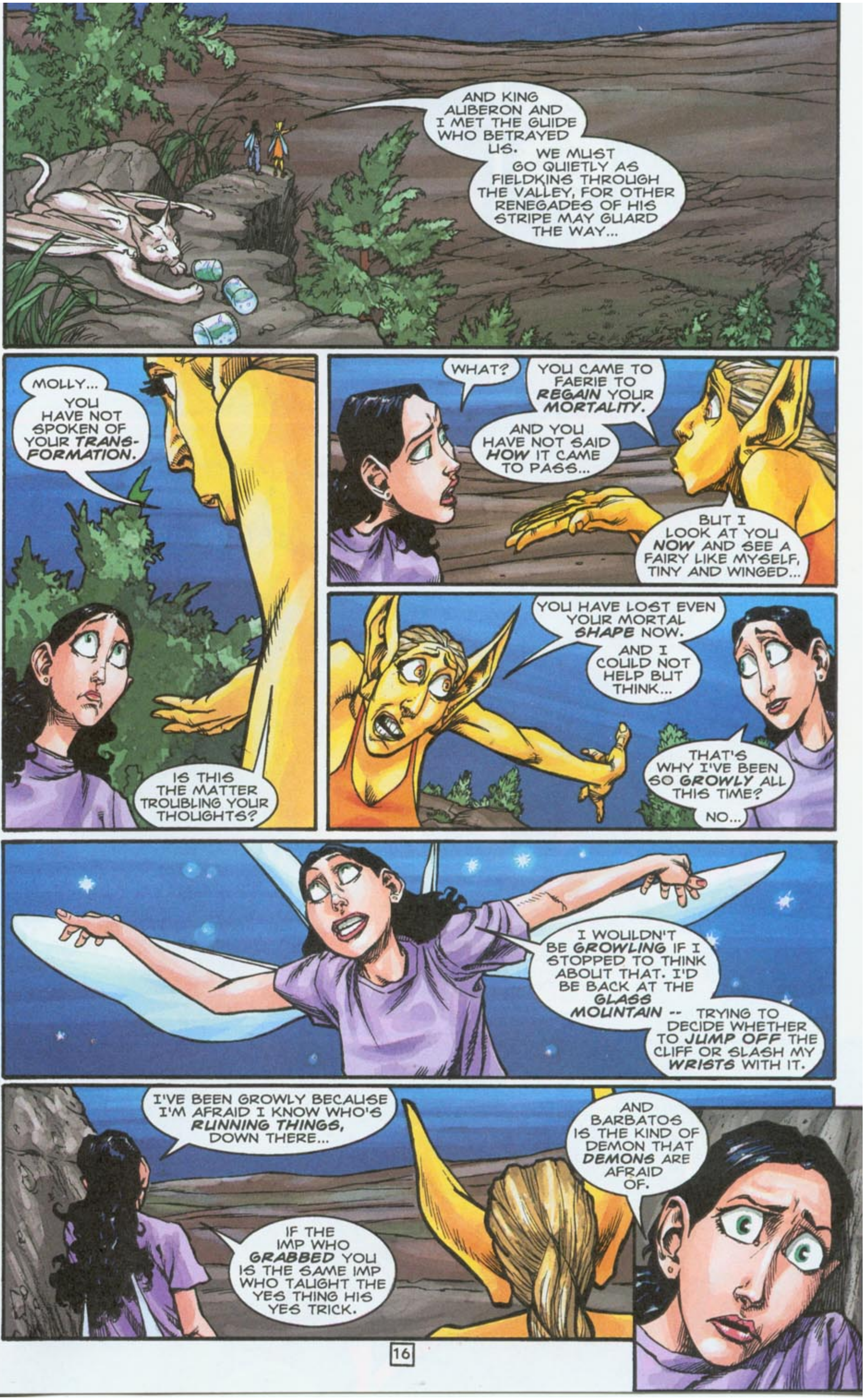

HOWEVER DID YOU DEFEAT HIM?
THOSE BIZARRE AFFIRMATIONS GAVE HIM AN UNSPEAKABLE POWER...
BIZARRE WHAT?
HE PRACTICED A DISTURBING RITUAL, THE LIKES OF WHICH I HAVE NEVER SEEN.
STANDING BEFORE THE MIRROR, HE PRAISED HIMSELF, SMILING GROTESQUELY ALL THE WHILE.
"EVERY DAY," HE WOULD SAY, "IN EVERY WAY, I AM BECOMING A MORE POWERFUL BEING..."
THAT IS BIZARRE.
IT SOUNDS EXACTLY LIKE THE CRAP MY DAD USED TO SAY, AFTER HE TOOK THAT CORRESPONDENCE COURSE...
BONGSQUALL ACQUIRED THE SKILL FROM A WANDERING IMP.
A TESTIMONIAL DOCUMENT HANGS ON YONDER WALL.
Oh MY GOD... HE'S HERE.
MOLLY, YOU ASTONISH ME!
DO YOU TRULY KNOW THIS IMP?
HE'S NOT AN IMP.
Barbatos
HE'S A DEMON.

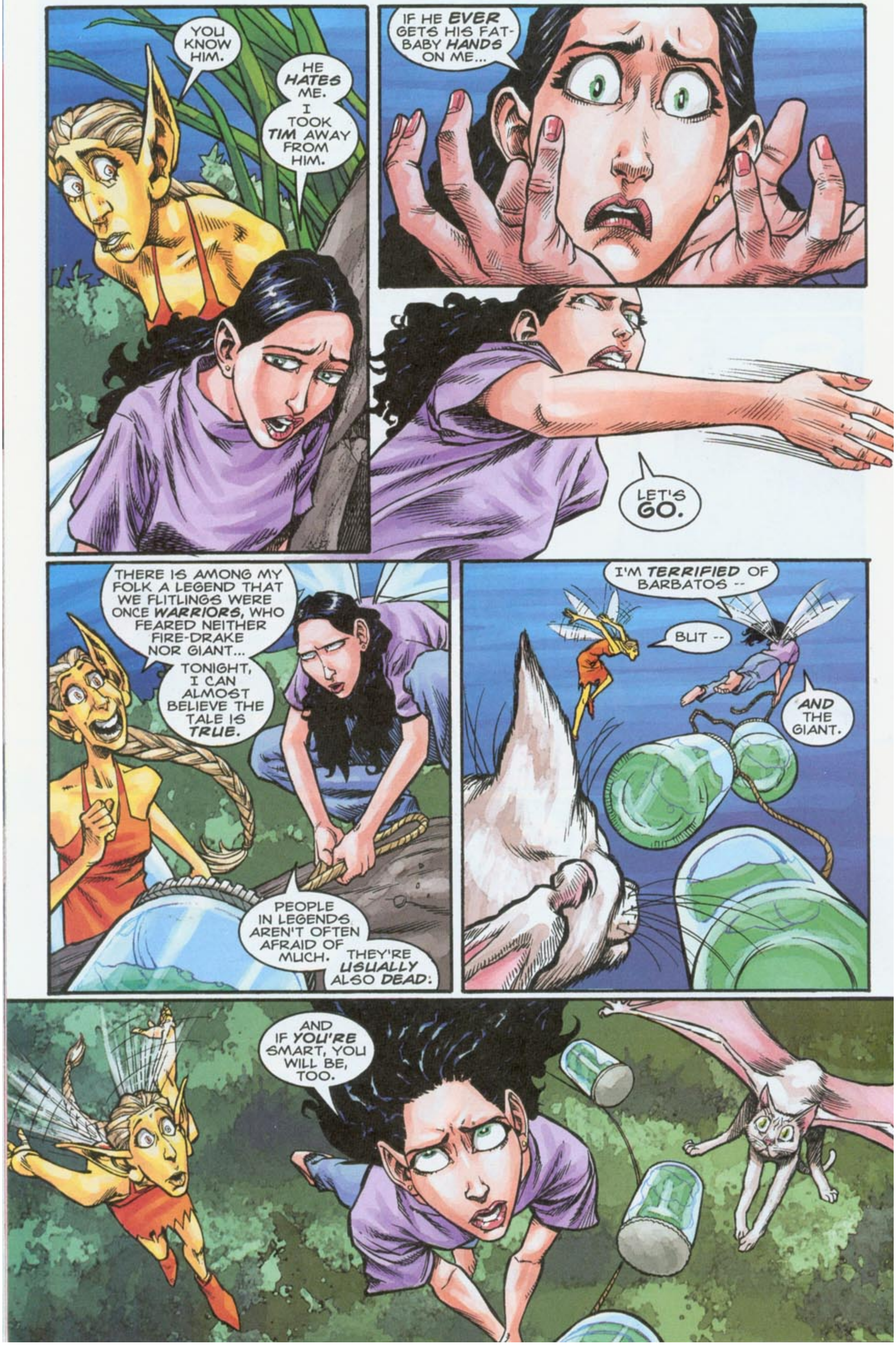

CLANG
GUARD!
WHAT NOW, WOMAN?
IS THERE NO END TO YOUR PEEVISHNESS?
CONDUCT ME TO YOUR MASTER...
AND FOR YOUR OWN SAKE, WITHOUT DELAY.
YOU HAVE RESOLVED TO WED KING IBBIT, AFTER ALL?
I HAD JUDGED YOU TOO PROUD TO BEND SO.
COME, COME --
YONDER LIES THE CASTLE. IBBIT WAITS HERE, IN THE DESERT.
SO?

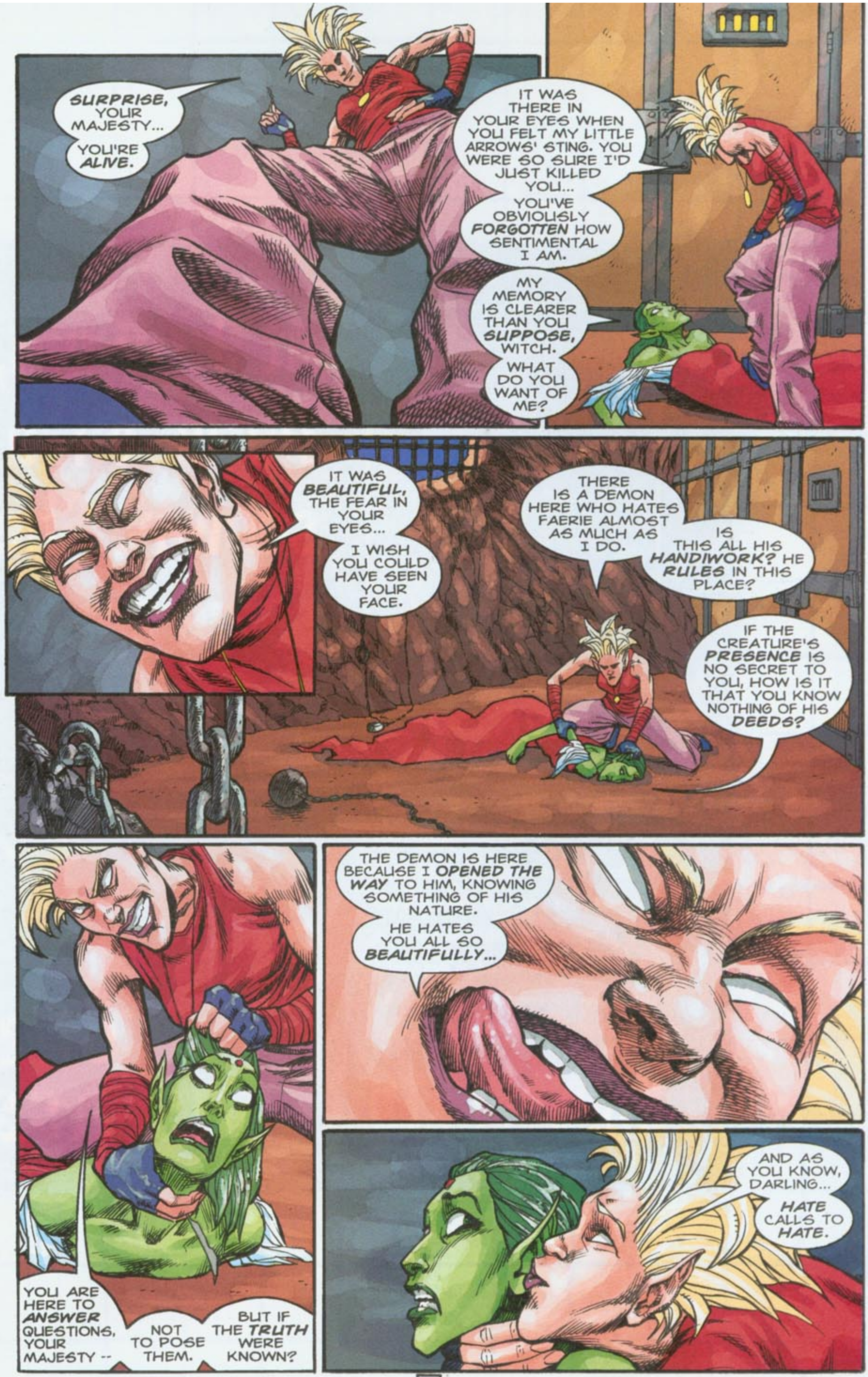

DID YOU NOT *HEAR* ME?
I WISH TO SPEAK TO YOUR *MASTER*...
CONCERNING THE WHEREABOUTS OF MY DEAR AND FAITHFUL *HUSBAND*, AUBERON.

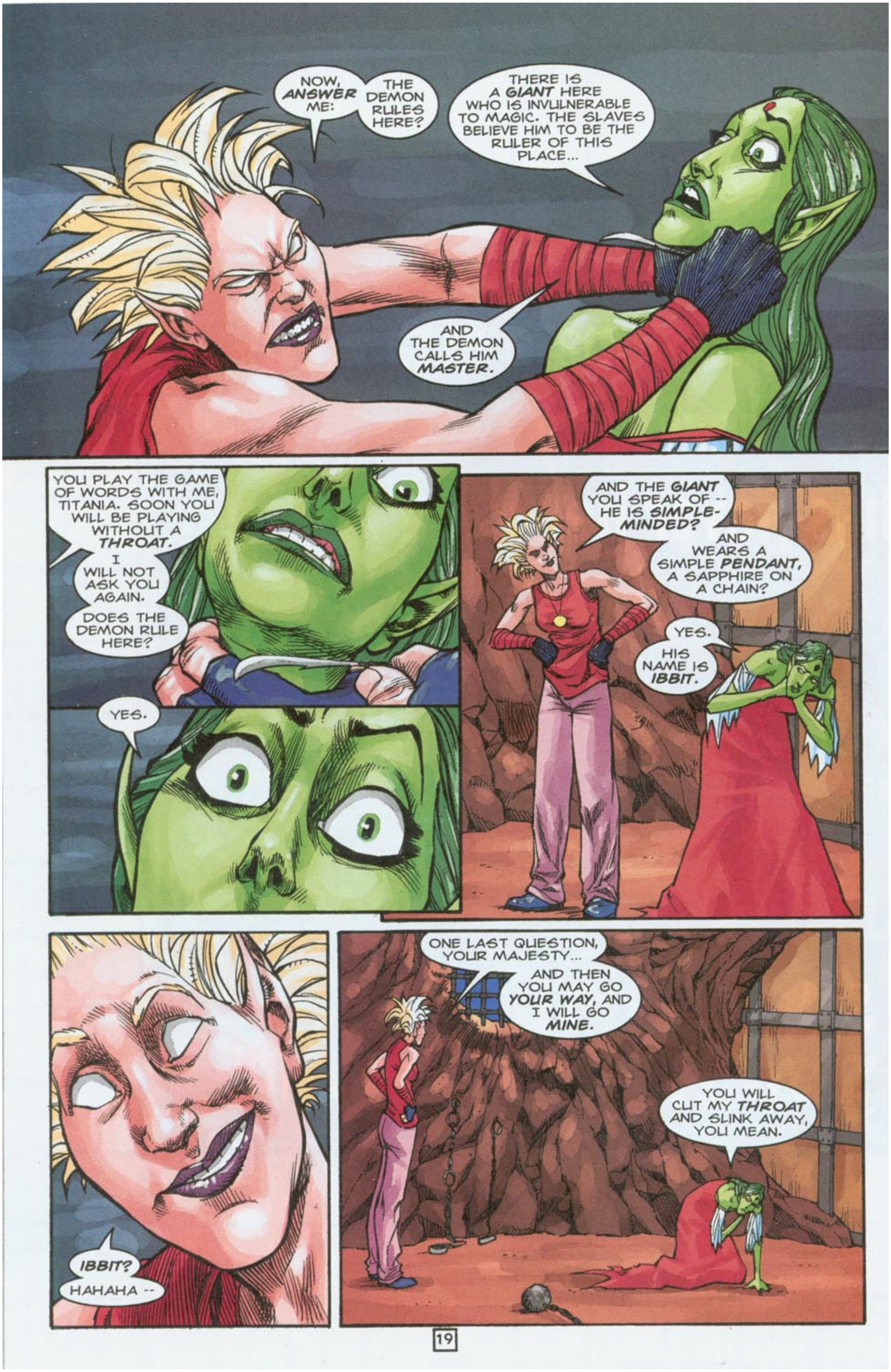

FWIP
AND WHERE ARE *YOU* BOUND THIS LOVELY NIGHT, TITANIA?

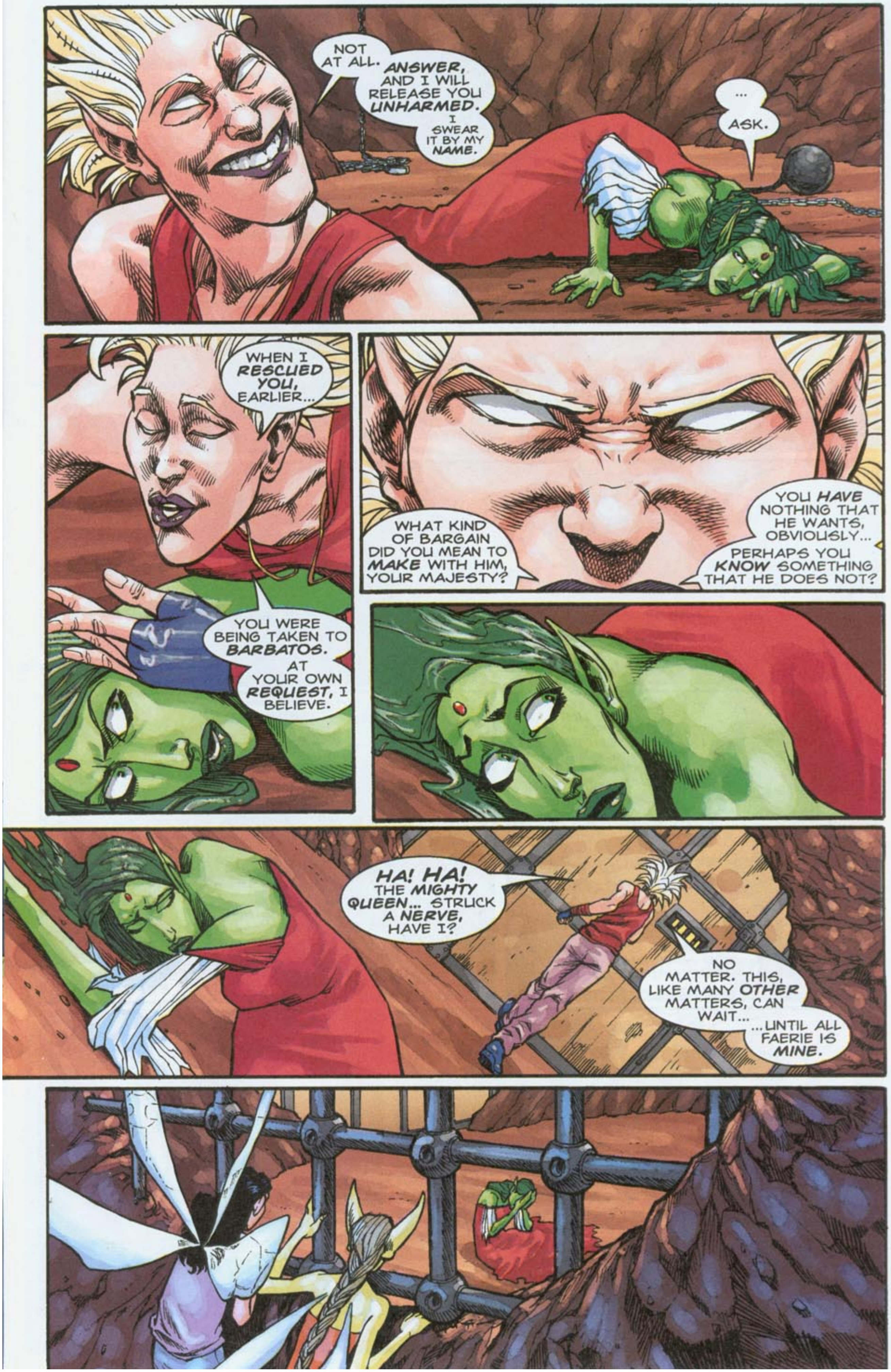

I HAD THOUGHT I COULD DO NO WORSE THAN SEEK A DEMON'S COMPANY.
I SEE NOW THAT I WAS **WRONG.**
YES, TITANIA...
FWIP
FWIP
YOU WERE WRONG.

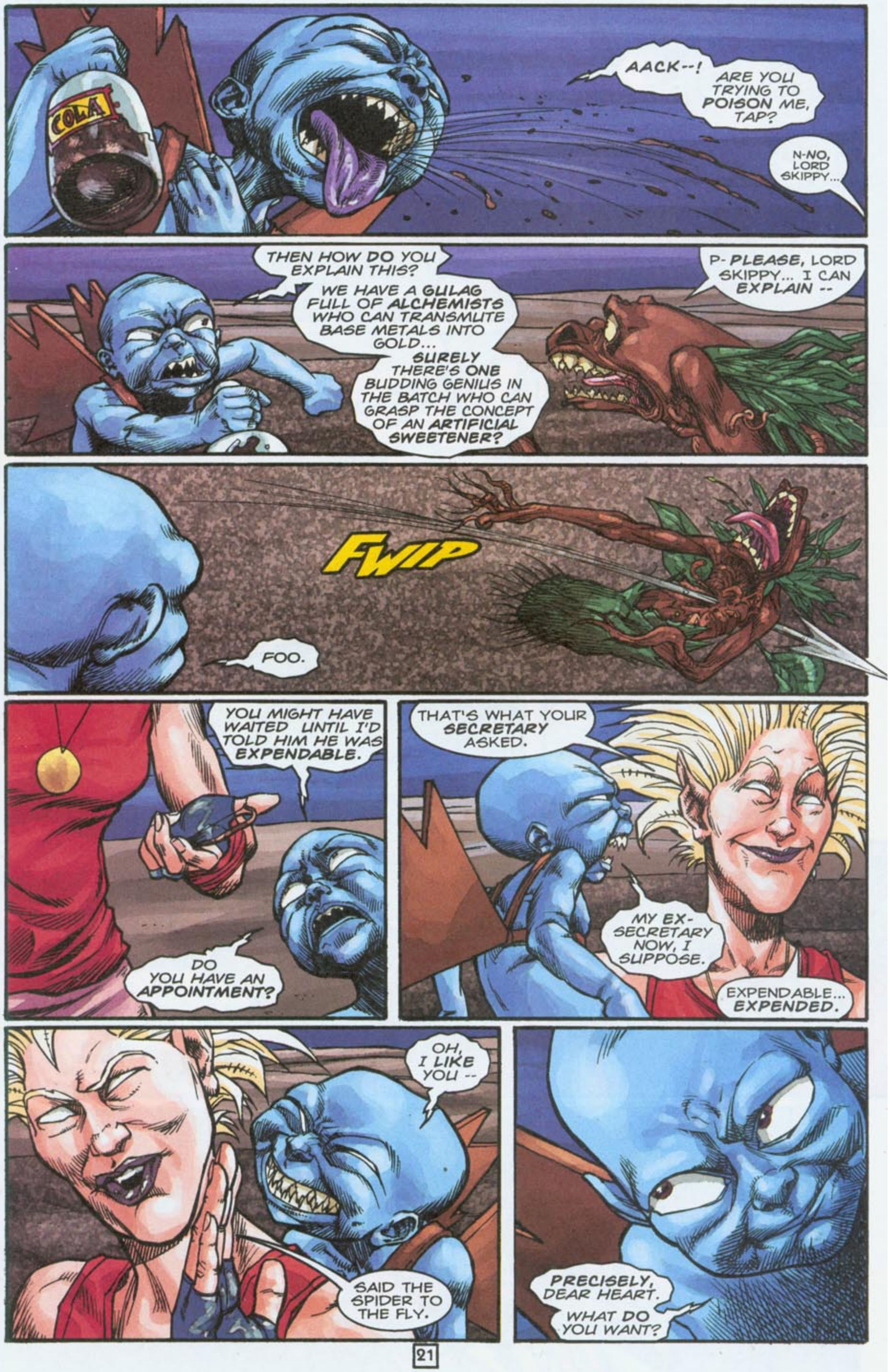

AND KING AUBERON AND I MET THE GUIDE WHO BETRAYED US.
WE MUST GO QUIETLY AS FIELDKINS THROUGH THE VALLEY, FOR OTHER RENEGADES OF HIS STRIPE MAY GUARD THE WAY...
MOLLY... YOU HAVE NOT SPOKEN OF YOUR *TRANSFORMATION.*
IS THIS THE MATTER TROUBLING YOUR THOUGHTS?
WHAT?
YOU CAME TO FAERIE TO *REGAIN* YOUR *MORTALITY.*
AND YOU HAVE NOT SAID *HOW* IT CAME TO PASS...
BUT I LOOK AT YOU *NOW* AND SEE A FAIRY LIKE MYSELF, TINY AND WINGED...
YOU HAVE LOST EVEN YOUR MORTAL *SHAPE* NOW.
AND I COULD NOT HELP BUT THINK...
THAT'S WHY I'VE BEEN SO *GROWLY* ALL THIS TIME?
NO...
I WOULDN'T BE *GROWLING* IF I STOPPED TO THINK ABOUT THAT. I'D BE BACK AT THE *GLASS MOUNTAIN* -- TRYING TO DECIDE WHETHER TO *JUMP OFF* THE CLIFF OR SLASH MY *WRISTS* WITH IT.
I'VE BEEN GROWLY BECAUSE I'M AFRAID I KNOW WHO'S *RUNNING THINGS,* DOWN THERE...
IF THE IMP WHO *GRABBED* YOU IS THE SAME IMP WHO TAUGHT THE YES THING HIS YES TRICK.
AND BARBATOS IS THE KIND OF DEMON THAT *DEMONS* ARE AFRAID OF.

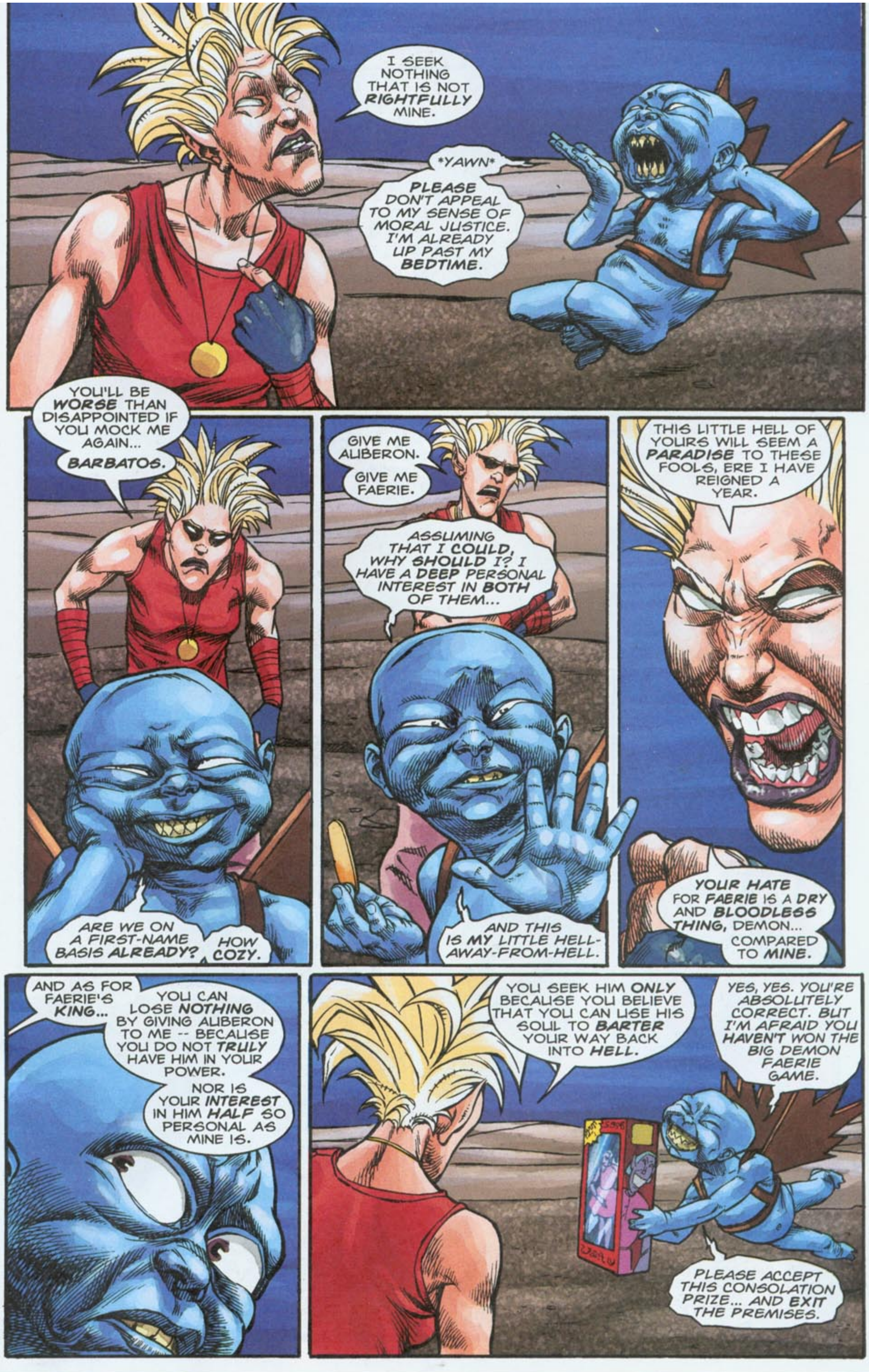

YOU KNOW HIM.
HE *HATES* ME. I TOOK *TIM* AWAY FROM HIM.
IF HE *EVER* GETS HIS FAT-BABY *HANDS* ON ME...
LET'S **GO.**
THERE IS AMONG MY FOLK A LEGEND THAT WE FLITLINGS WERE ONCE *WARRIORS*, WHO FEARED NEITHER FIRE-DRAKE NOR GIANT...
TONIGHT, I CAN ALMOST BELIEVE THE TALE IS *TRUE*.
PEOPLE IN LEGENDS AREN'T OFTEN AFRAID OF MUCH. THEY'RE *USUALLY* ALSO *DEAD*.
I'M *TERRIFIED* OF BARBATOS --
BUT --
AND THE GIANT.
AND IF *YOU'RE* SMART, YOU WILL BE, TOO.

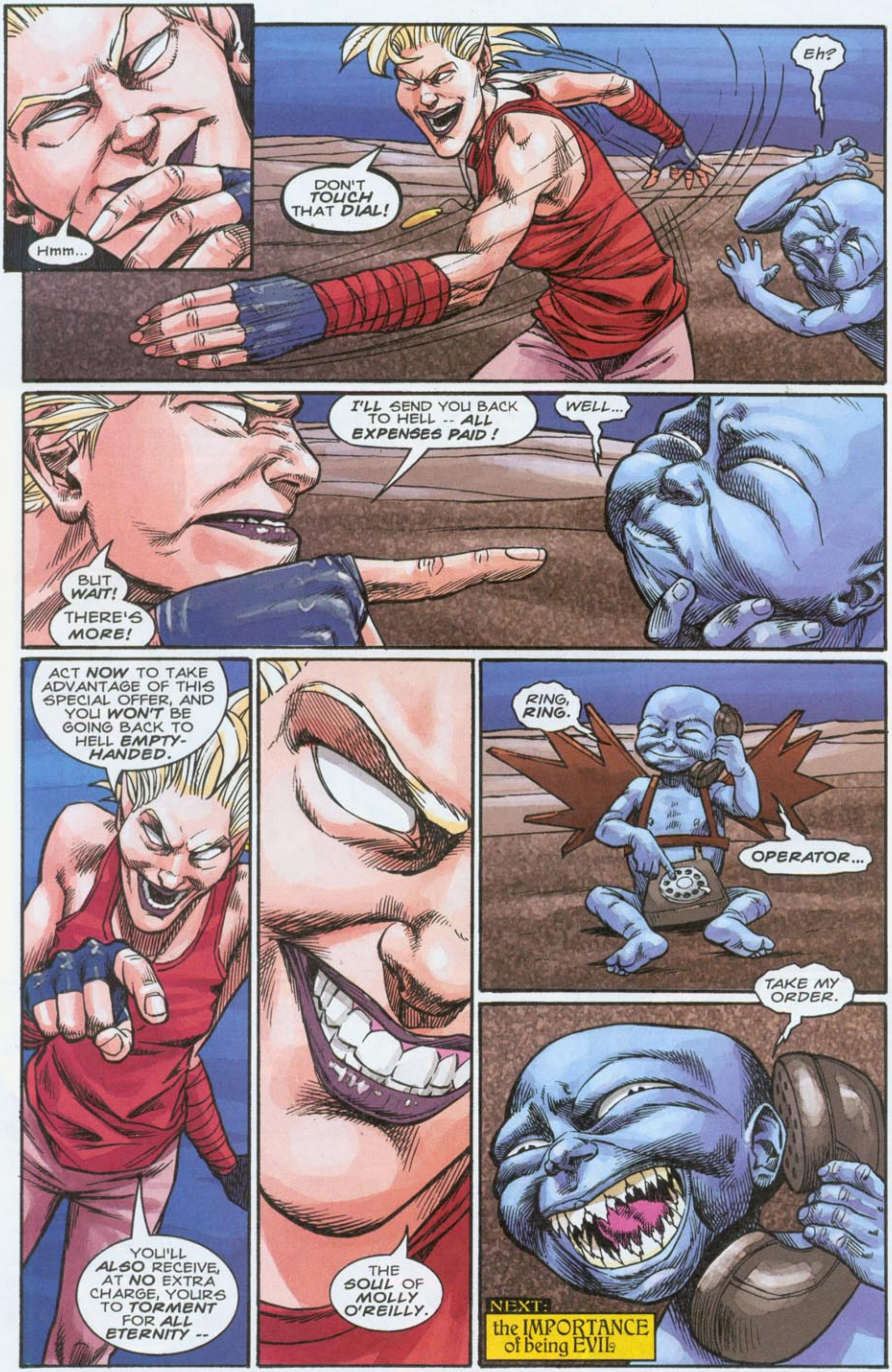

SURPRISE, YOUR MAJESTY...
YOU'RE ALIVE.
IT WAS THERE IN YOUR EYES WHEN YOU FELT MY LITTLE ARROWS' STING. YOU WERE SO SURE I'D JUST KILLED YOU...
YOU'VE OBVIOUSLY FORGOTTEN HOW SENTIMENTAL I AM.
MY MEMORY IS CLEARER THAN YOU SUPPOSE, WITCH.
WHAT DO YOU WANT OF ME?
IT WAS BEAUTIFUL, THE FEAR IN YOUR EYES...
I WISH YOU COULD HAVE SEEN YOUR FACE.
THERE IS A DEMON HERE WHO HATES FAERIE ALMOST AS MUCH AS I DO.
IS THIS ALL HIS HANDIWORK? HE RULES IN THIS PLACE?
IF THE CREATURE'S PRESENCE IS NO SECRET TO YOU, HOW IS IT THAT YOU KNOW NOTHING OF HIS DEEDS?
YOU ARE HERE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS, YOUR MAJESTY --
NOT TO POSE THEM.
BUT IF THE TRUTH WERE KNOWN?
THE DEMON IS HERE BECAUSE I OPENED THE WAY TO HIM, KNOWING SOMETHING OF HIS NATURE.
HE HATES YOU ALL SO BEAUTIFULLY...
AND AS YOU KNOW, DARLING...
HATE CALLS TO HATE.

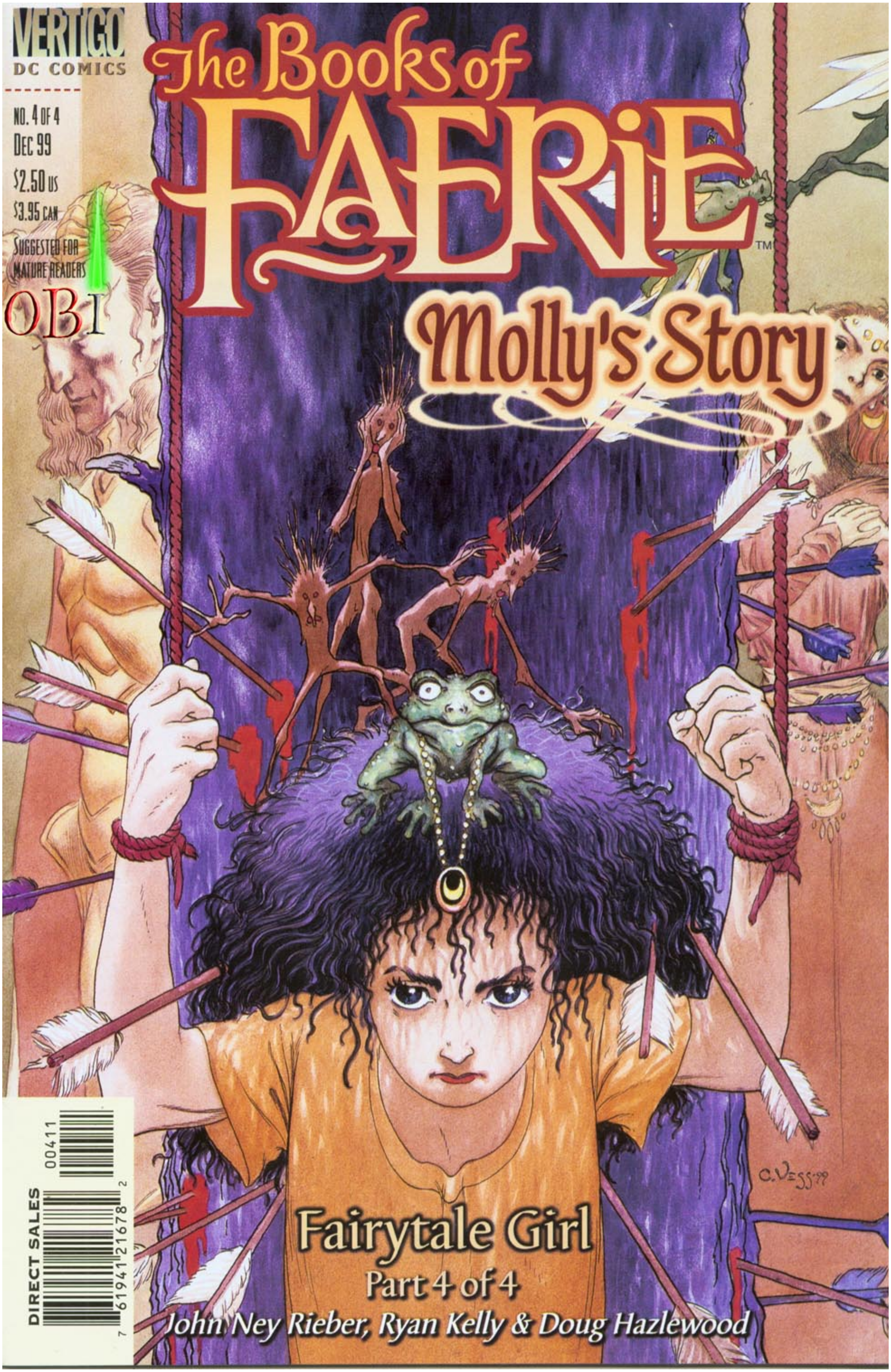

NOW, ANSWER ME:
THE DEMON RULES HERE?
THERE IS A GIANT HERE WHO IS INVULNERABLE TO MAGIC. THE SLAVES BELIEVE HIM TO BE THE RULER OF THIS PLACE...
AND THE DEMON CALLS HIM MASTER.
YOU PLAY THE GAME OF WORDS WITH ME, TITANIA. SOON YOU WILL BE PLAYING WITHOUT A THROAT.
I WILL NOT ASK YOU AGAIN.
DOES THE DEMON RULE HERE?
YES.
AND THE GIANT YOU SPEAK OF -- HE IS SIMPLE-MINDED?
AND WEARS A SIMPLE PENDANT, A SAPPHIRE ON A CHAIN?
YES.
HIS NAME IS IBBIT.
IBBIT?
HAHAHA --
ONE LAST QUESTION, YOUR MAJESTY...
AND THEN YOU MAY GO YOUR WAY, AND I WILL GO MINE.
YOU WILL CUT MY THROAT AND SLINK AWAY, YOU MEAN.


NOT AT ALL. ANSWER, AND I WILL RELEASE YOU UNHARMED. I SWEAR IT BY MY NAME.
... ASK.
WHEN I RESCUED YOU, EARLIER...
YOU WERE BEING TAKEN TO BARBATOS. AT YOUR OWN REQUEST, I BELIEVE.
WHAT KIND OF BARGAIN DID YOU MEAN TO MAKE WITH HIM, YOUR MAJESTY?
YOU HAVE NOTHING THAT HE WANTS, OBVIOUSLY... PERHAPS YOU KNOW SOMETHING THAT HE DOES NOT?
HA! HA! THE MIGHTY QUEEN... STRUCK A NERVE, HAVE I?
NO MATTER. THIS, LIKE MANY OTHER MATTERS, CAN WAIT... ...UNTIL ALL FAERIE IS MINE.


COLA
AACK--! ARE YOU TRYING TO POISON ME, TAP?
N-NO, LORD SKIPPY...
THEN HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THIS?
WE HAVE A GULAG FULL OF ALCHEMISTS WHO CAN TRANSMUTE BASE METALS INTO GOLD...
SURELY THERE'S ONE BUDDING GENIUS IN THE BATCH WHO CAN GRASP THE CONCEPT OF AN ARTIFICIAL SWEETENER?
P- PLEASE, LORD SKIPPY... I CAN EXPLAIN --
FWIP
FOO.
YOU MIGHT HAVE WAITED UNTIL I'D TOLD HIM HE WAS EXPENDABLE.
DO YOU HAVE AN APPOINTMENT?
THAT'S WHAT YOUR SECRETARY ASKED.
MY EX-SECRETARY NOW, I SUPPOSE.
EXPENDABLE... EXPENDED.
OH, I LIKE YOU --
SAID THE SPIDER TO THE FLY.
PRECISELY, DEAR HEART.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?


I SEEK NOTHING THAT IS NOT RIGHTFULLY MINE.
YAWN
PLEASE DON'T APPEAL TO MY SENSE OF MORAL JUSTICE. I'M ALREADY UP PAST MY BEDTIME.
YOU'LL BE WORSE THAN DISAPPOINTED IF YOU MOCK ME AGAIN... BARBATOS.
ARE WE ON A FIRST-NAME BASIS ALREADY?
HOW COZY.
GIVE ME ALIBERON.
GIVE ME FAERIE.
ASSUMING THAT I COULD, WHY SHOULD I? I HAVE A DEEP PERSONAL INTEREST IN BOTH OF THEM...
AND THIS IS MY LITTLE HELL-AWAY-FROM-HELL.
THIS LITTLE HELL OF YOURS WILL SEEM A PARADISE TO THESE FOOLS, ERE I HAVE REIGNED A YEAR.
YOUR HATE FOR FAERIE IS A DRY AND BLOODLESS THING, DEMON... COMPARED TO MINE.
AND AS FOR FAERIE'S KING...
YOU CAN LOSE NOTHING BY GIVING ALIBERON TO ME -- BECAUSE YOU DO NOT TRULY HAVE HIM IN YOUR POWER.
NOR IS YOUR INTEREST IN HIM HALF SO PERSONAL AS MINE IS.
YOU SEEK HIM ONLY BECAUSE YOU BELIEVE THAT YOU CAN USE HIS SOUL TO BARTER YOUR WAY BACK INTO HELL.
YES, YES. YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY CORRECT. BUT I'M AFRAID YOU HAVEN'T WON THE BIG DEMON FAERIE GAME.
PLEASE ACCEPT THIS CONSOLATION PRIZE... AND EXIT THE PREMISES.


Hmm...
DON'T TOUCH THAT DIAL!
Eh?
I'LL SEND YOU BACK TO HELL -- ALL EXPENSES PAID!
WELL...
BUT WAIT! THERE'S MORE!
ACT NOW TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS SPECIAL OFFER, AND YOU WON'T BE GOING BACK TO HELL EMPTY-HANDED.
YOU'LL ALSO RECEIVE, AT NO EXTRA CHARGE, YOURS TO TORMENT FOR ALL ETERNITY --
THE SOUL OF MOLLY O'REILLY.
RING, RING.
OPERATOR...
TAKE MY ORDER.
NEXT:
the IMPORTANCE of being EVIL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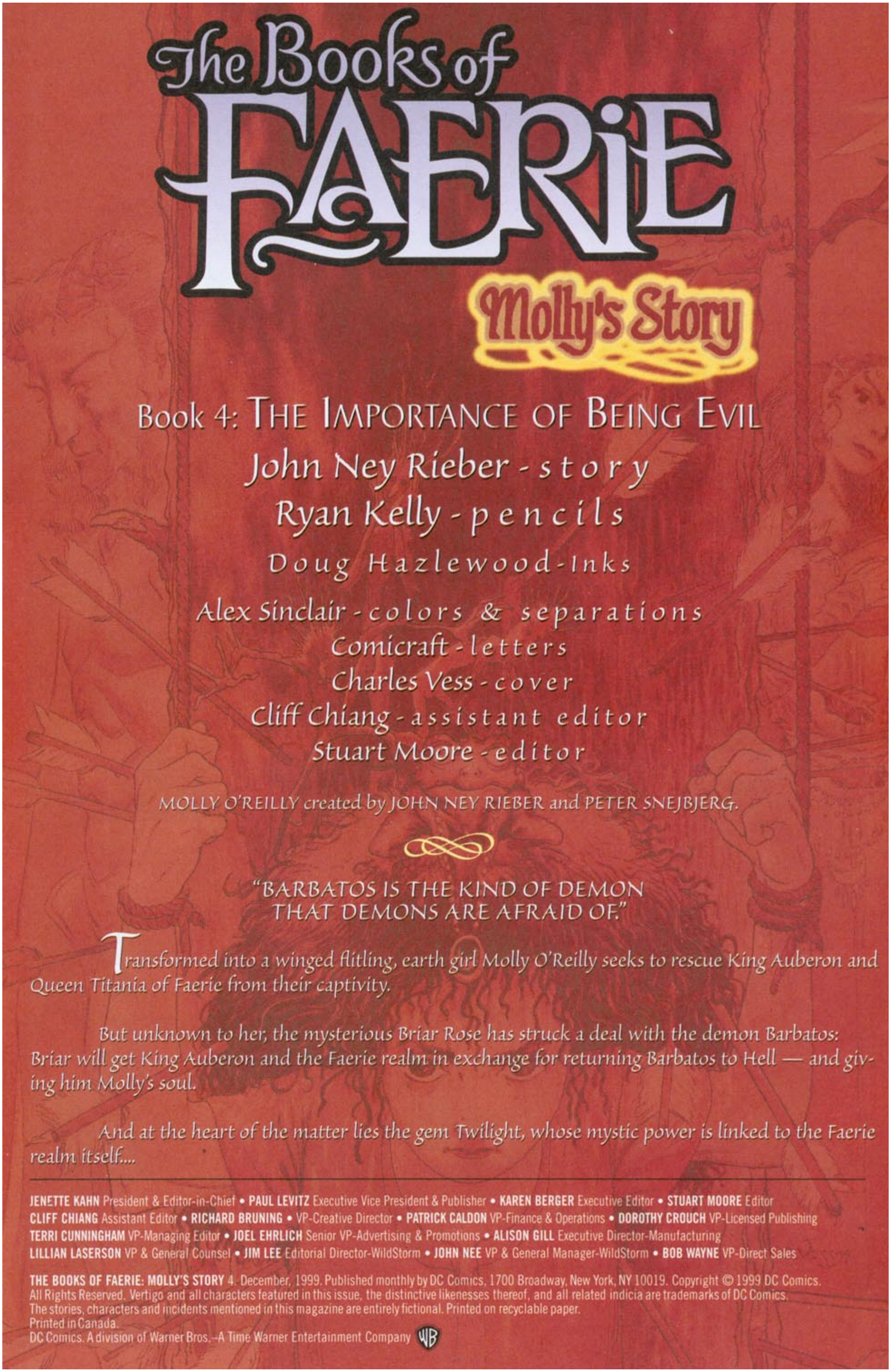

The Books of FAERIE

Molly's Story

Book 4: THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EVIL

John Ney Rieber - story
Ryan Kelly - pencils
Doug Hazlewood - Inks
Alex Sinclair - colors & separations
Comicraft - letters
Charles Vess - cover
Cliff Chiang - assistant editor
Stuart Moore - editor

MOLLY O'REILLY created by JOHN NEY RIEBER and PETER SNEJBJERG.

* * *

"BARBATOS IS THE KIND OF DEMON
THAT DEMONS ARE AFRAID OF."

Transformed into a winged flitling, earth girl Molly O'Reilly seeks to rescue King Auberon and Queen Titania of Faerie from their captivity.

But unknown to her, the mysterious Briar Rose has struck a deal with the demon Barbatos: Briar will get King Auberon and the Faerie realm in exchange for returning Barbatos to Hell — and giving him Molly's soul.

And at the heart of the matter lies the gem Twilight, whose mystic power is linked to the Faerie realm itself....

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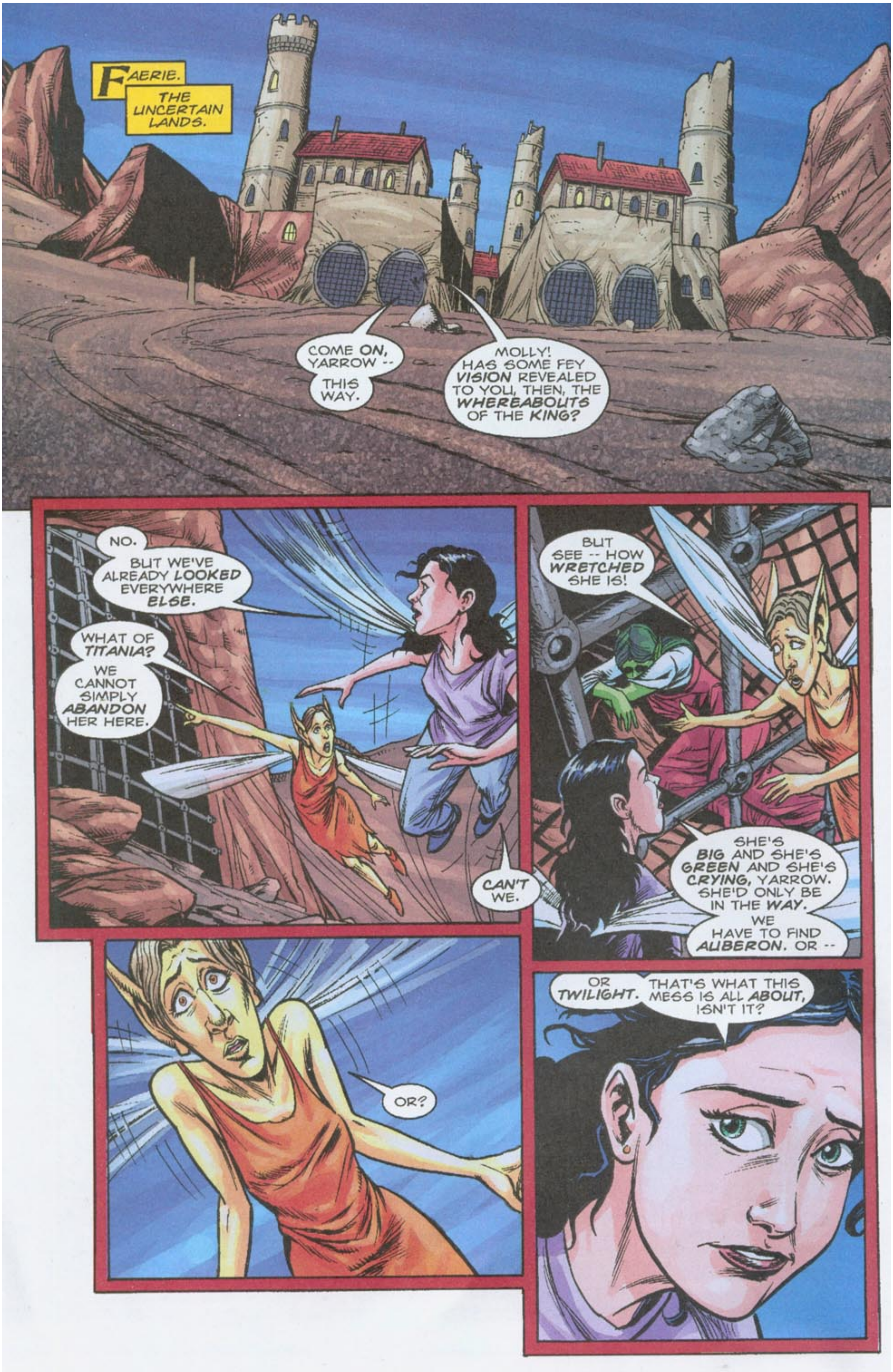
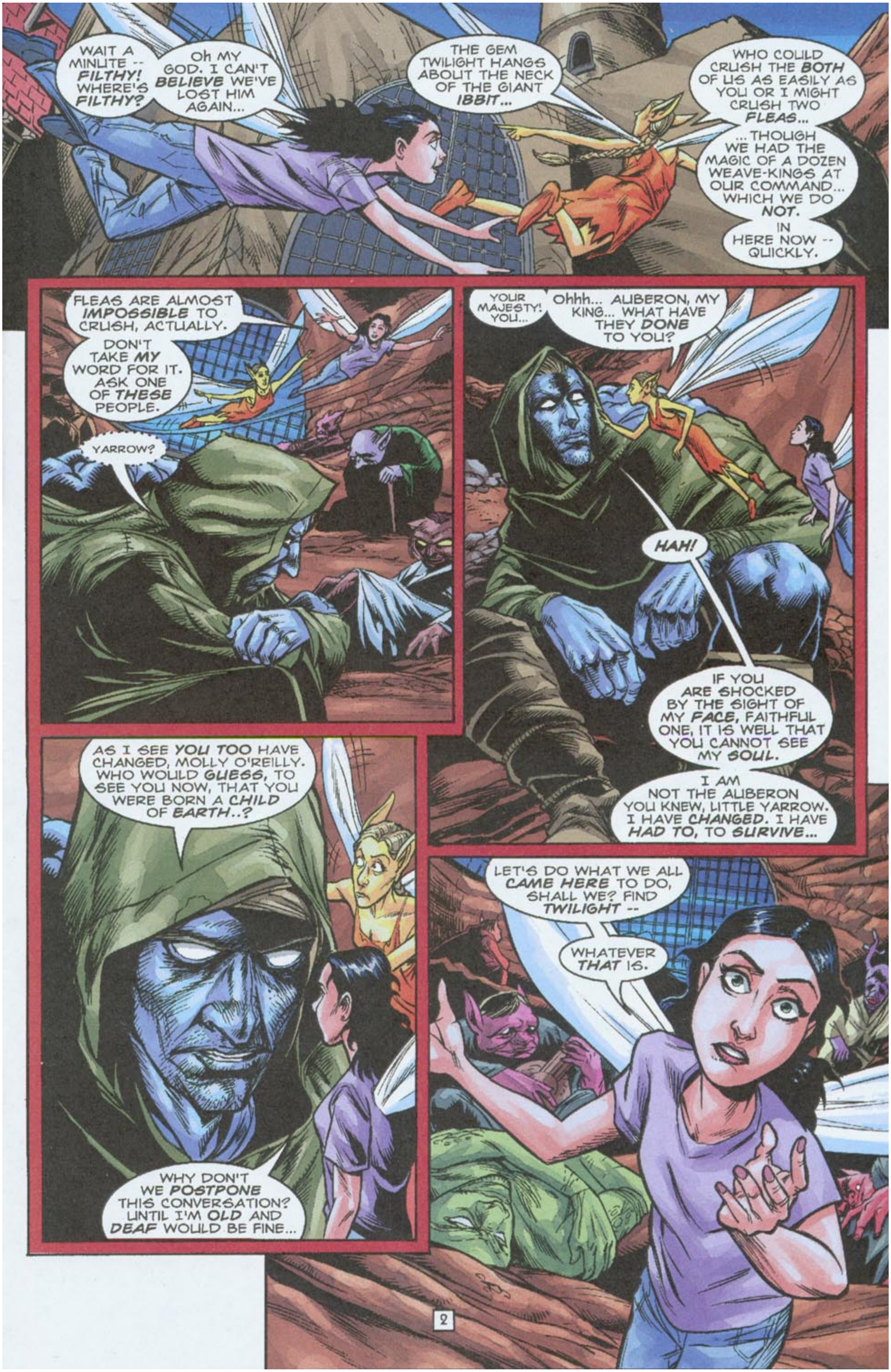
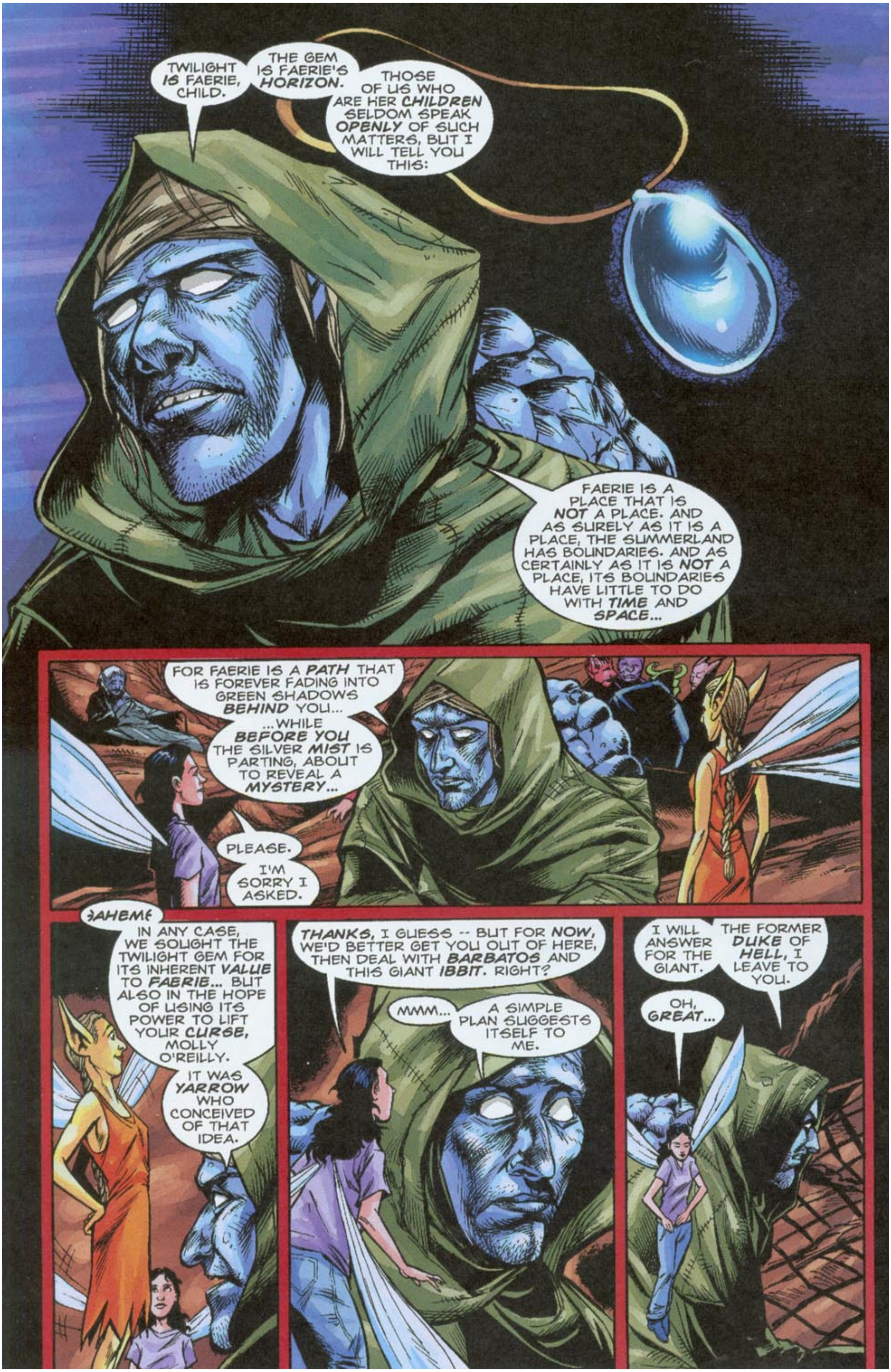
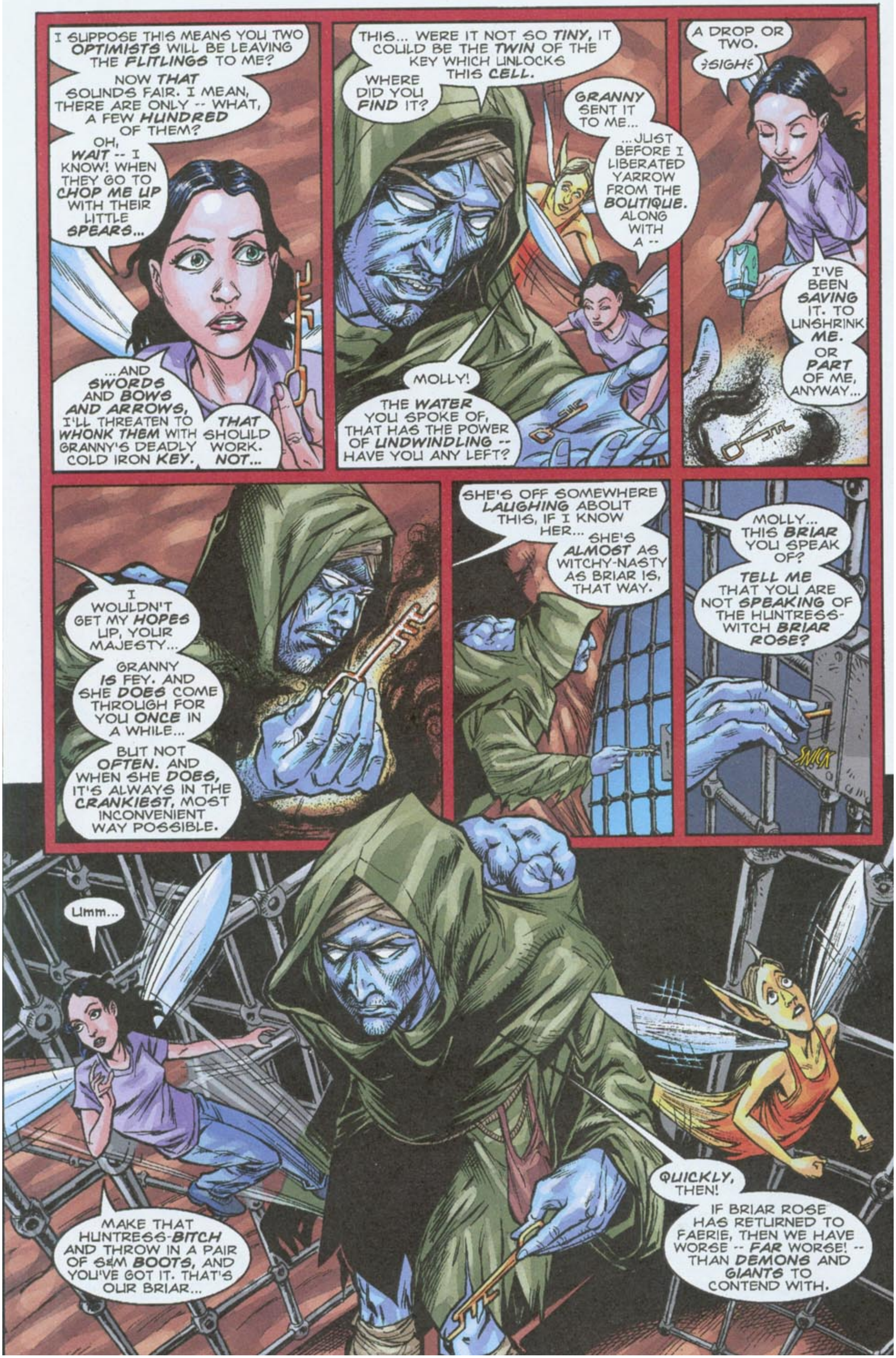
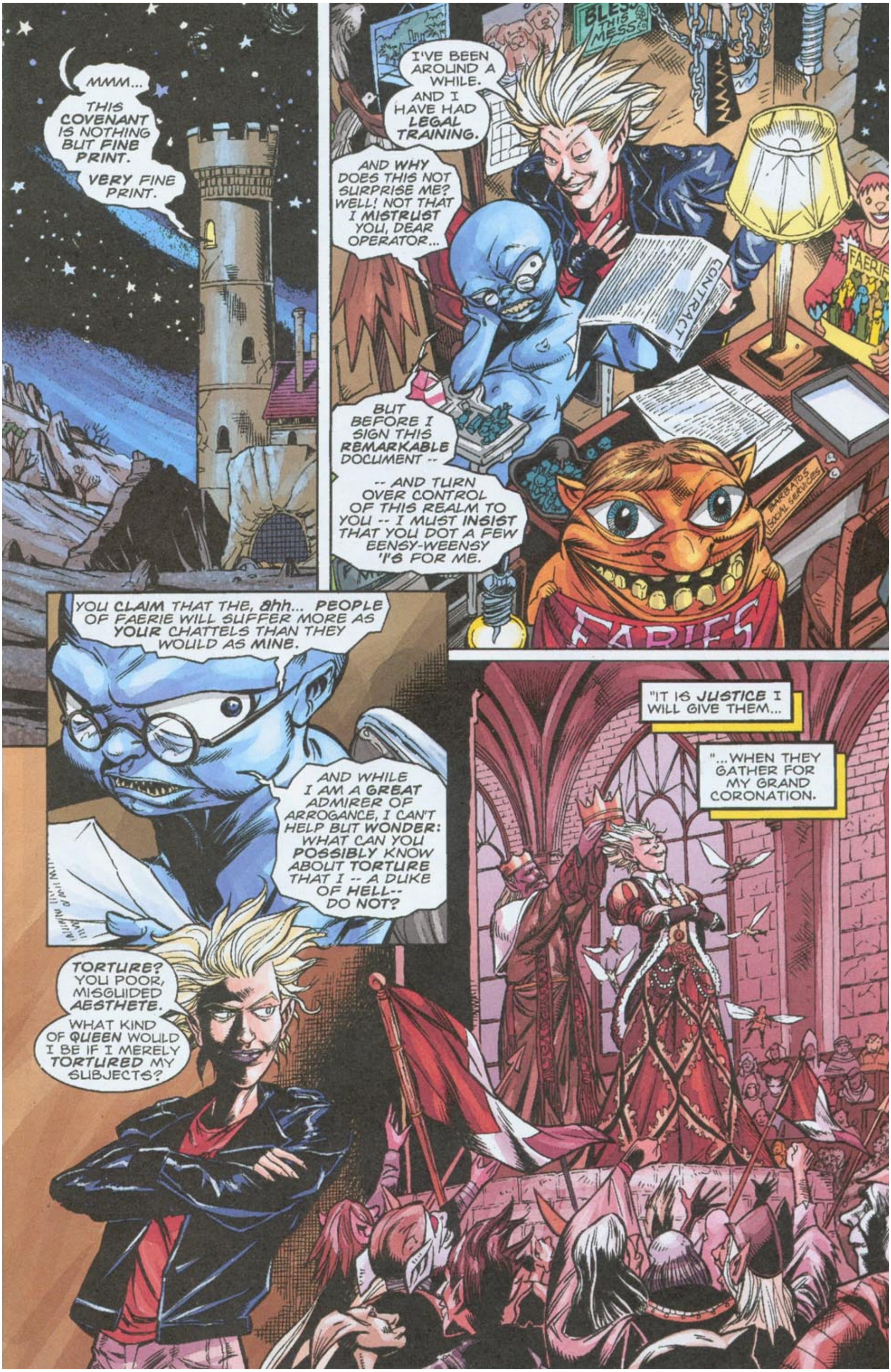
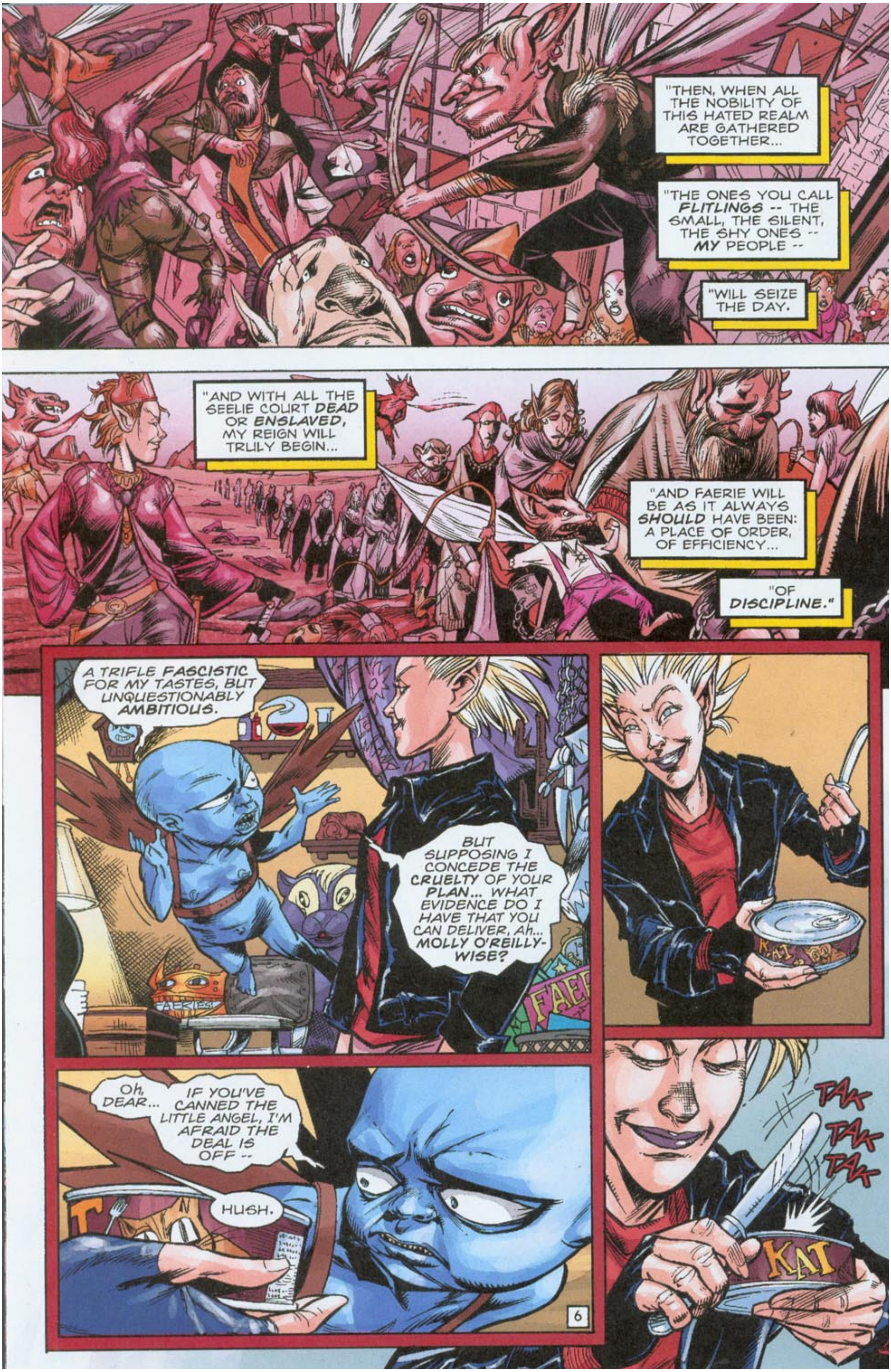

FAERIE.
THE UNCERTAIN LANDS.
COME ON, YARROW -- THIS WAY.
MOLLY! HAS SOME FEY VISION REVEALED TO YOU, THEN, THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE KING?
NO. BUT WE'VE ALREADY LOOKED EVERYWHERE ELSE.
WHAT OF TITANIA? WE CANNOT SIMPLY ABANDON HER HERE.
CAN'T WE.
BUT SEE -- HOW WRETCHED SHE IS!
SHE'S BIG AND SHE'S GREEN AND SHE'S CRYING, YARROW. SHE'D ONLY BE IN THE WAY. WE HAVE TO FIND AUBERON. OR --
OR?
OR TWILIGHT. THAT'S WHAT THIS MESS IS ALL ABOUT, ISN'T IT?

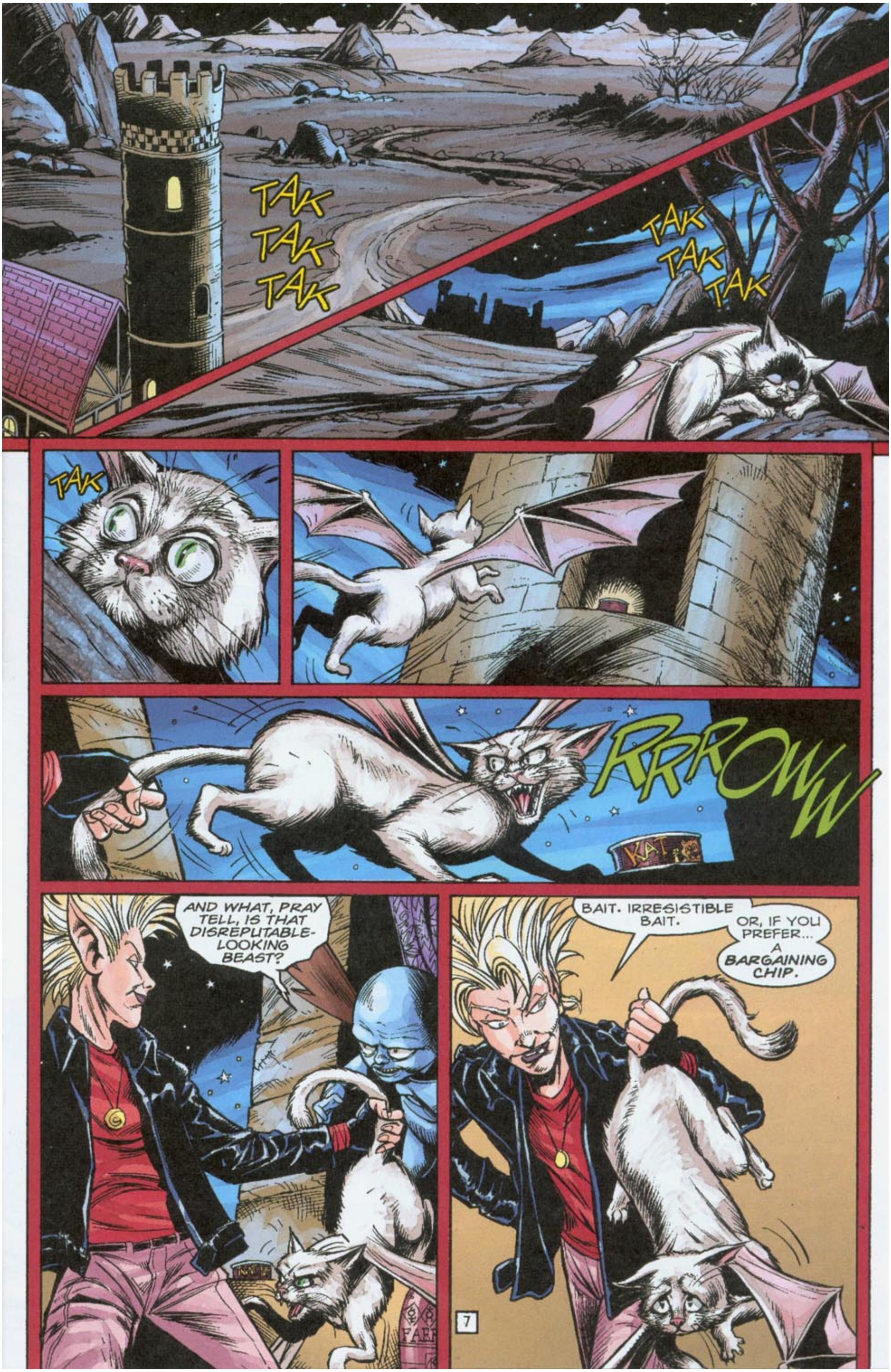

WAIT A MINUTE -- FILTHY! WHERE'S FILTHY?
Oh MY GOD. I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'VE LOST HIM AGAIN...
THE GEM TWILIGHT HANGS ABOUT THE NECK OF THE GIANT IBBIT...
WHO COULD CRUSH THE BOTH OF US AS EASILY AS YOU OR I MIGHT CRUSH TWO FLEAS...
...THOUGH WE HAD THE MAGIC OF A DOZEN WEAVE-KINGS AT OUR COMMAND... WHICH WE DO NOT.
IN HERE NOW -- QUICKLY.
FLEAS ARE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO CRUSH, ACTUALLY.
DON'T TAKE MY WORD FOR IT. ASK ONE OF THESE PEOPLE.
YARROW?
YOUR MAJESTY! YOU...
Ohhh... AUBERON, MY KING... WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO YOU?
HAH!
IF YOU ARE SHOCKED BY THE SIGHT OF MY FACE, FAITHFUL ONE, IT IS WELL THAT YOU CANNOT SEE MY SOUL.
I AM NOT THE AUBERON YOU KNEW, LITTLE YARROW. I HAVE CHANGED. I HAVE HAD TO, TO SURVIVE...
AS I SEE YOU TOO HAVE CHANGED, MOLLY O'REILLY. WHO WOULD GUESS, TO SEE YOU NOW, THAT YOU WERE BORN A CHILD OF EARTH..?
WHY DON'T WE POSTPONE THIS CONVERSATION? UNTIL I'M OLD AND DEAF WOULD BE FINE...
LET'S DO WHAT WE ALL CAME HERE TO DO, SHALL WE? FIND TWILIGHT --
WHATEVER THAT IS.

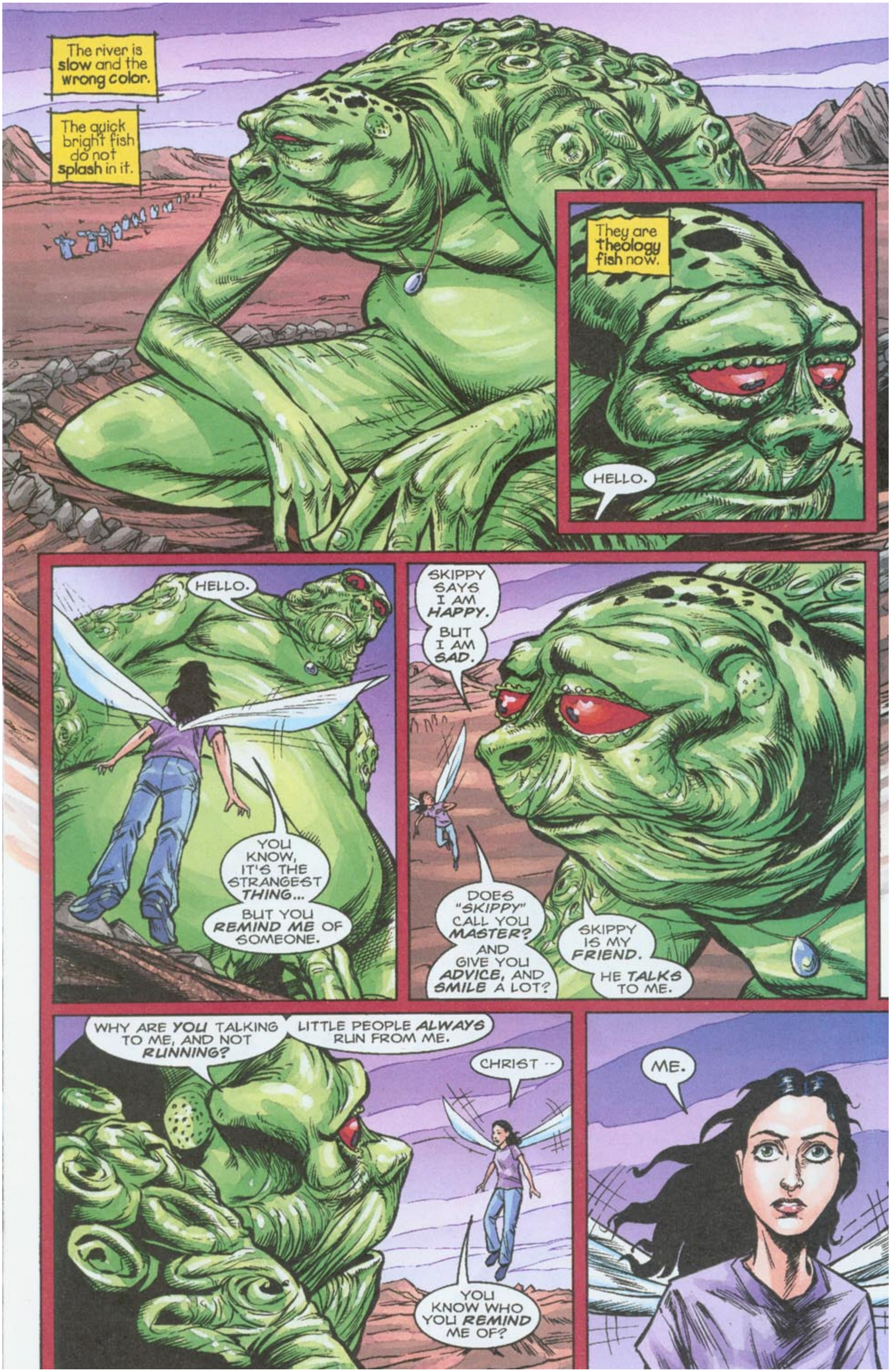

TWILIGHT IS FAERIE, CHILD.
THE GEM IS FAERIE'S HORIZON.
THOSE OF US WHO ARE HER CHILDREN SELDOM SPEAK OPENLY OF SUCH MATTERS, BUT I WILL TELL YOU THIS:
FAERIE IS A PLACE THAT IS NOT A PLACE. AND AS SURELY AS IT IS A PLACE, THE SUMMERLAND HAS BOUNDARIES. AND AS CERTAINLY AS IT IS NOT A PLACE, ITS BOUNDARIES HAVE LITTLE TO DO WITH TIME AND SPACE...
FOR FAERIE IS A PATH THAT IS FOREVER FADING INTO GREEN SHADOWS BEHIND YOU...
...WHILE BEFORE YOU THE SILVER MIST IS PARTING, ABOUT TO REVEAL A MYSTERY...
PLEASE.
I'M SORRY I ASKED.
AHEM
IN ANY CASE, WE SOUGHT THE TWILIGHT GEM FOR ITS INHERENT VALUE TO FAERIE... BUT ALSO IN THE HOPE OF USING ITS POWER TO LIFT YOUR CURSE, MOLLY O'REILLY.
IT WAS YARROW WHO CONCEIVED OF THAT IDEA.
THANKS, I GUESS -- BUT FOR NOW, WE'D BETTER GET YOU OUT OF HERE, THEN DEAL WITH BARBATOS AND THIS GIANT IBBIT. RIGHT?
MMM...
A SIMPLE PLAN SUGGESTS ITSELF TO ME.
I WILL ANSWER FOR THE GIANT.
THE FORMER DUKE OF HELL, I LEAVE TO YOU.
OH, GREAT...

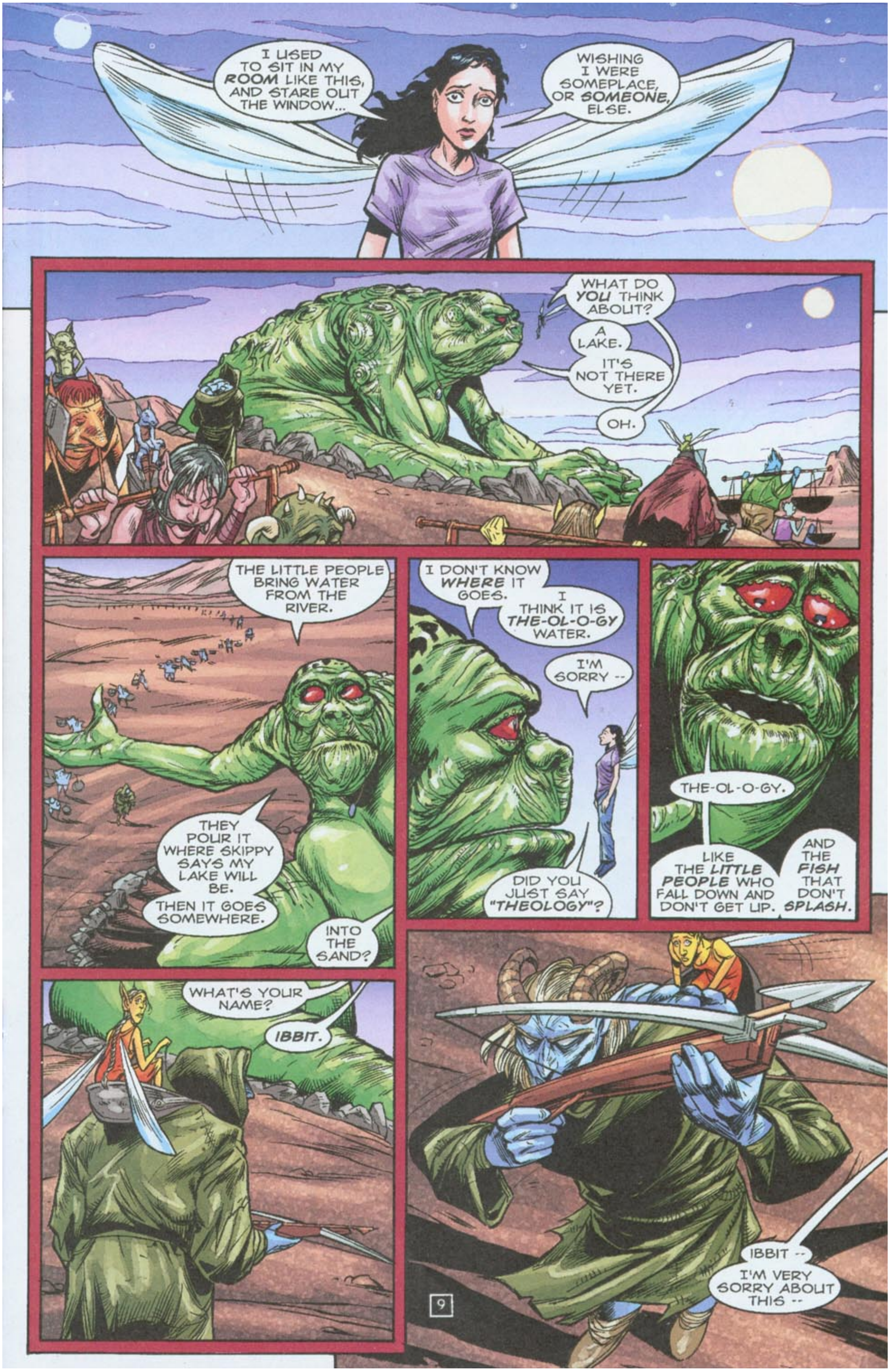

I SUPPOSE THIS MEANS YOU TWO *OPTIMISTS* WILL BE LEAVING THE *FLITLINGS* TO ME?
NOW *THAT* SOUNDS FAIR. I MEAN, THERE ARE ONLY -- WHAT, A FEW *HUNDRED* OF THEM?
OH, *WAIT* -- I KNOW! WHEN THEY GO TO *CHOP ME UP* WITH THEIR LITTLE *SPEARS*...
...AND *SWORDS* AND *BOWS AND ARROWS,* I'LL THREATEN TO *WHONK THEM* WITH GRANNY'S DEADLY COLD IRON *KEY.*
THAT SHOULD WORK. *NOT*...
THIS... WERE IT NOT SO *TINY,* IT COULD BE THE *TWIN* OF THE KEY WHICH UNLOCKS THIS *CELL.*
WHERE DID YOU *FIND* IT?
GRANNY SENT IT TO ME...
...JUST BEFORE I LIBERATED YARROW FROM THE *BOUTIQUE.* ALONG WITH A --
MOLLY!
THE *WATER* YOU SPOKE OF, THAT HAS THE POWER OF *UNDWINDLING* -- HAVE YOU ANY LEFT?
A DROP OR TWO.
SIGH
I'VE BEEN *SAVING* IT. TO UNSHRINK *ME.*
OR *PART* OF ME, ANYWAY...
I WOULDN'T GET MY *HOPES* UP, YOUR MAJESTY...
GRANNY *IS* FEY. AND SHE *DOES* COME THROUGH FOR YOU *ONCE* IN A WHILE...
BUT NOT *OFTEN.* AND WHEN SHE *DOES,* IT'S ALWAYS IN THE *CRANKIEST,* MOST INCONVENIENT WAY POSSIBLE.
SHE'S OFF SOMEWHERE *LAUGHING* ABOUT THIS, IF I KNOW HER...
SHE'S *ALMOST* AS WITCHY-NASTY AS BRIAR IS, THAT WAY.
MOLLY... THIS *BRIAR* YOU SPEAK OF?
TELL ME THAT YOU ARE NOT *SPEAKING* OF THE HUNTRESS-WITCH *BRIAR ROSE?*
SNICK
Umm...
MAKE THAT HUNTRESS-*BITCH* AND THROW IN A PAIR OF S&M *BOOTS,* AND YOU'VE GOT IT. THAT'S OUR BRIAR...
QUICKLY, THEN!
IF BRIAR ROSE HAS RETURNED TO FAERIE, THEN WE HAVE WORSE -- *FAR* WORSE! -- THAN *DEMONS* AND *GIANTS* TO CONTEND WITH.

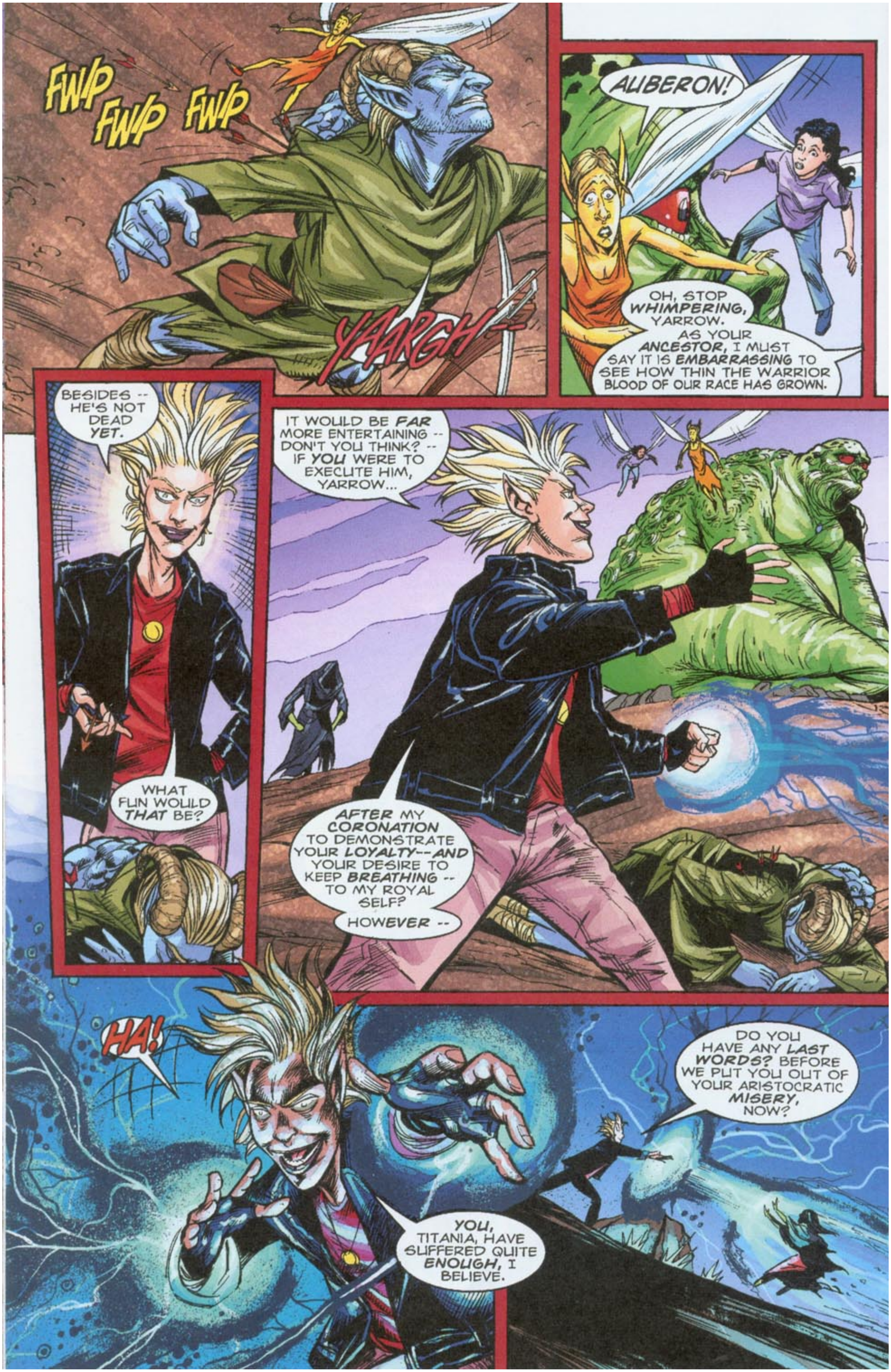

MMM...
THIS COVENANT IS NOTHING BUT FINE PRINT.
VERY FINE PRINT.
BLESS THIS MESS
I'VE BEEN AROUND A WHILE.
AND I HAVE HAD LEGAL TRAINING.
AND WHY DOES THIS NOT SURPRISE ME? WELL! NOT THAT I MISTRUST YOU, DEAR OPERATOR...
CONTRACT
FAERIE
BUT BEFORE I SIGN THIS REMARKABLE DOCUMENT --
-- AND TURN OVER CONTROL OF THIS REALM TO YOU -- I MUST INSIST THAT YOU DOT A FEW EENSY-WEENSY 'I'S FOR ME.
BARBATOS SOCIAL SERVICES
FAERIES
YOU CLAIM THAT THE, ahh... PEOPLE OF FAERIE WILL SUFFER MORE AS YOUR CHATTELS THAN THEY WOULD AS MINE.
AND WHILE I AM A GREAT ADMIRER OF ARROGANCE, I CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER: WHAT CAN YOU POSSIBLY KNOW ABOUT TORTURE THAT I -- A DUKE OF HELL-- DO NOT?
TORTURE? YOU POOR, MISGUIDED AESTHETE.
WHAT KIND OF QUEEN WOULD I BE IF I MERELY TORTURED MY SUBJECTS?
"IT IS JUSTICE I WILL GIVE THEM...
"...WHEN THEY GATHER FOR MY GRAND CORONATION.

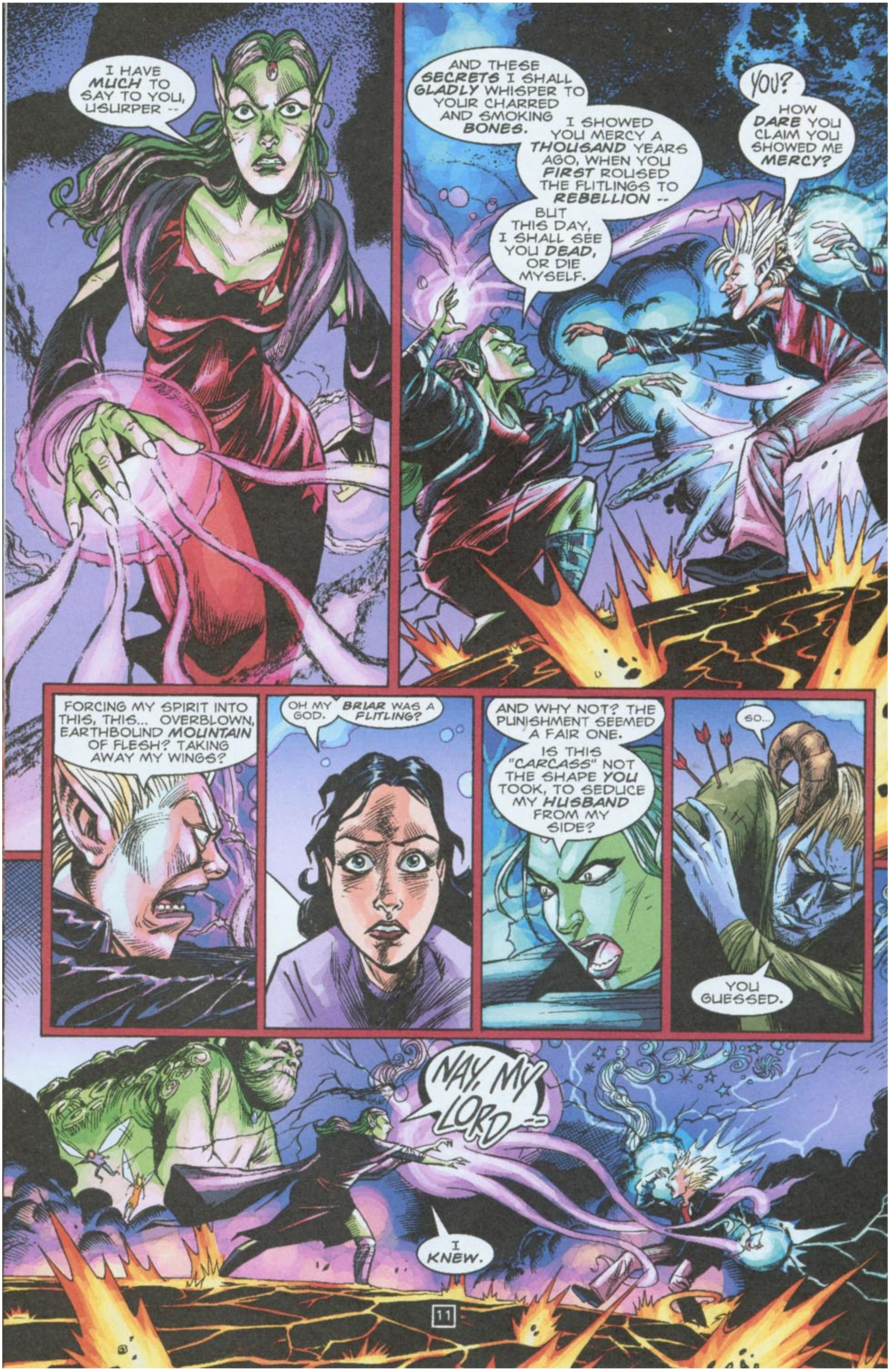

"THEN, WHEN ALL THE NOBILITY OF THIS HATED REALM ARE GATHERED TOGETHER...
"THE ONES YOU CALL ***FLITLINGS*** -- THE SMALL, THE SILENT, THE SHY ONES -- ***MY*** PEOPLE --
"WILL SEIZE THE DAY.
"AND WITH ALL THE SEELIE COURT ***DEAD*** OR ***ENSLAVED,*** MY REIGN WILL TRULY BEGIN...
"AND FAERIE WILL BE AS IT ALWAYS ***SHOULD*** HAVE BEEN: A PLACE OF ORDER, OF EFFICIENCY...
"OF ***DISCIPLINE.***"
A TRIFLE ***FASCISTIC*** FOR MY TASTES, BUT UNQUESTIONABLY ***AMBITIOUS.***
FAERIES!
BUT SUPPOSING I CONCEDE THE ***CRUELTY*** OF YOUR ***PLAN***... WHAT EVIDENCE DO I HAVE THAT YOU CAN DELIVER, Ah... ***MOLLY O'REILLY-WISE?***
FAER
KAT
Oh, DEAR... IF YOU'VE ***CANNED*** THE LITTLE ANGEL, I'M AFRAID THE DEAL IS OFF --
HUSH.
TAK
TAK
TAK
KAT

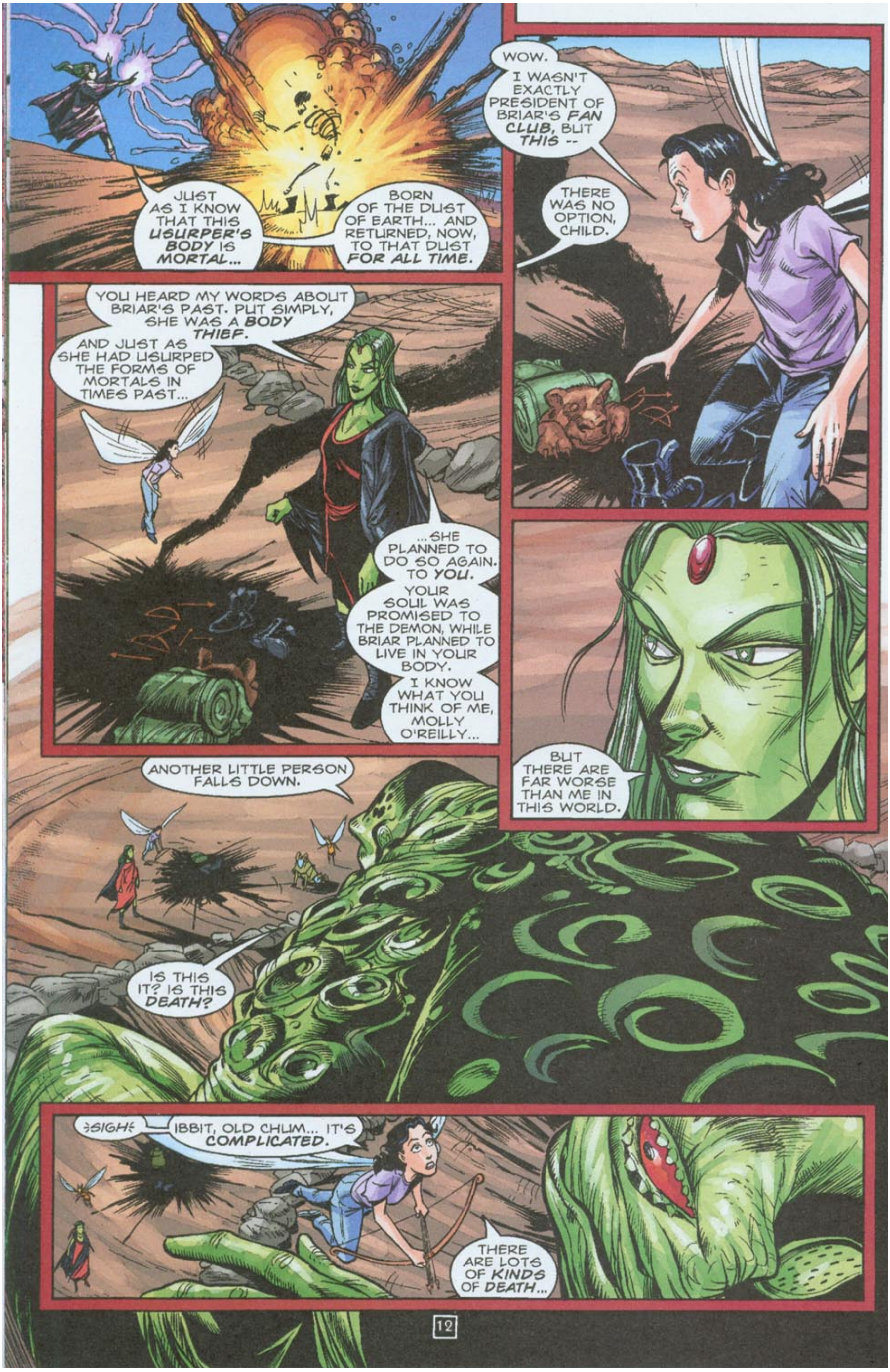

TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
RRROWW
KAT
AND WHAT, PRAY TELL, IS THAT DISREPUTABLE-LOOKING BEAST?
FAER
BAIT. IRRESISTIBLE BAIT.
OR, IF YOU PREFER... A **BARGAINING CHIP**.

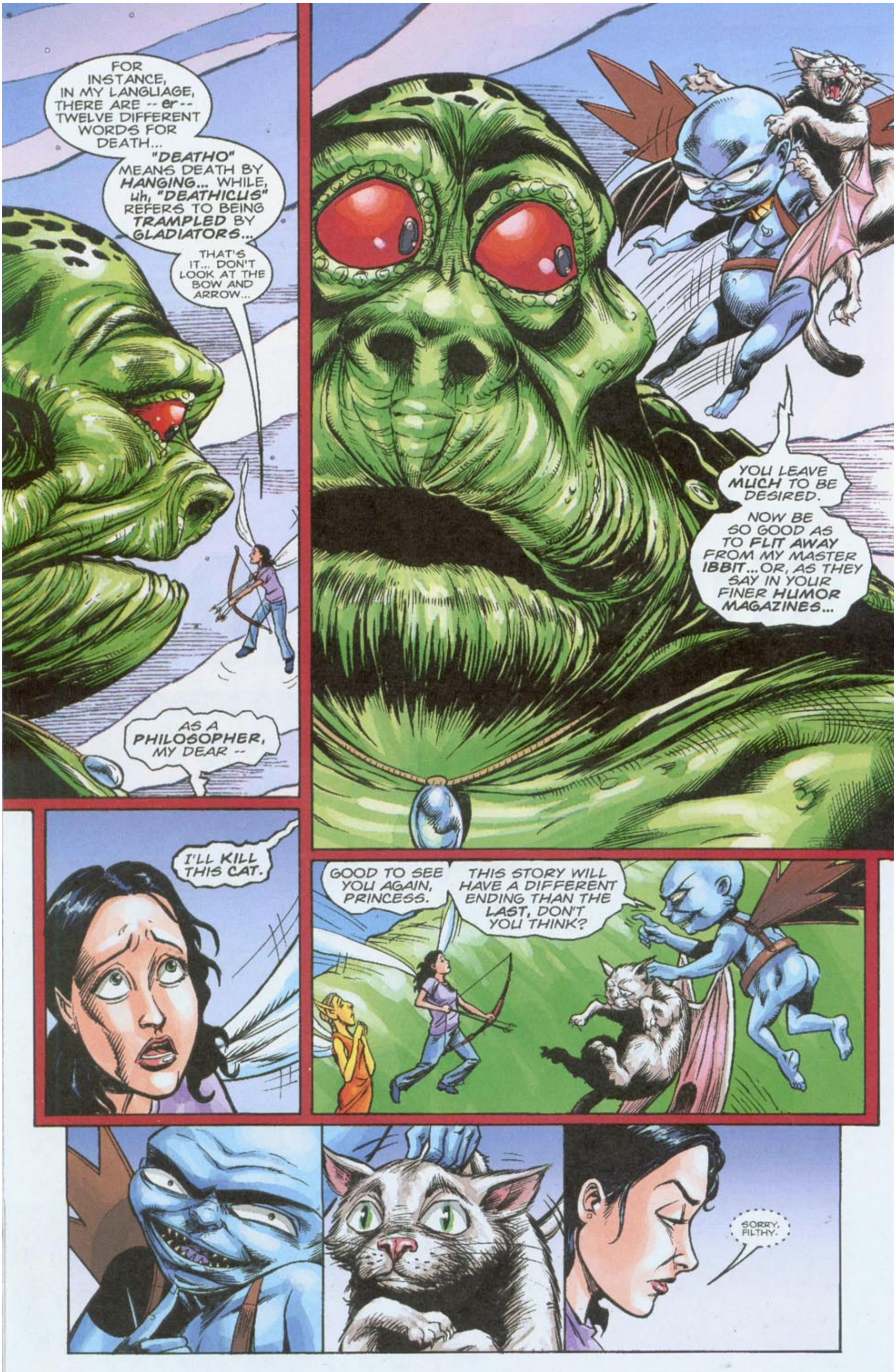

The river is slow and the wrong color.
The quick bright fish do not splash in it.
They are theology fish now.
HELLO.
HELLO.
YOU KNOW, IT'S THE STRANGEST THING... BUT YOU REMIND ME OF SOMEONE.
SKIPPY SAYS I AM HAPPY. BUT I AM SAD.
DOES "SKIPPY" CALL YOU MASTER? AND GIVE YOU ADVICE, AND SMILE A LOT?
SKIPPY IS MY FRIEND. HE TALKS TO ME.
WHY ARE YOU TALKING TO ME, AND NOT RUNNING?
LITTLE PEOPLE ALWAYS RUN FROM ME.
CHRIST --
YOU KNOW WHO YOU REMIND ME OF?
ME.

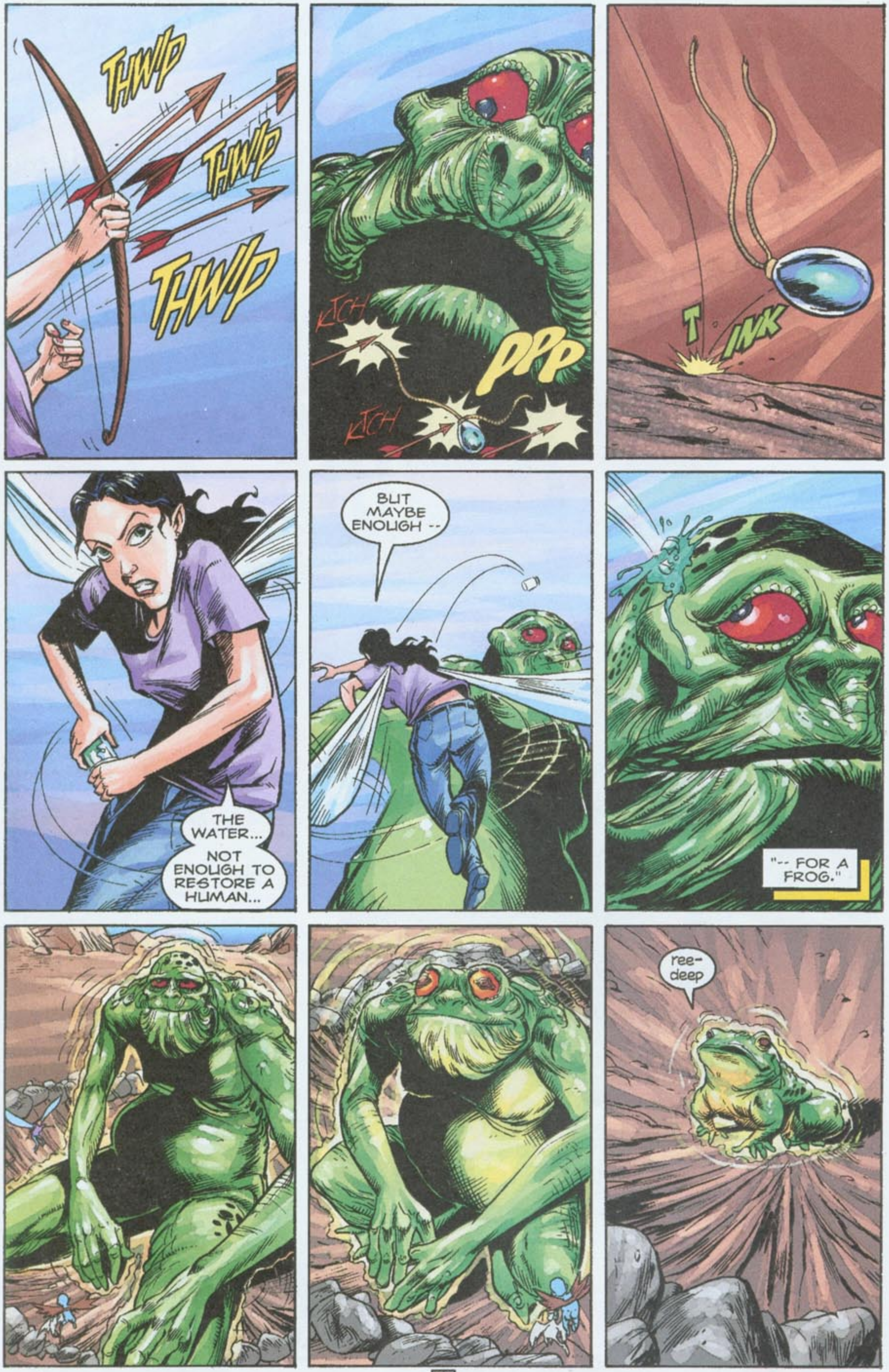

I USED TO SIT IN MY ROOM LIKE THIS, AND STARE OUT THE WINDOW...
WISHING I WERE SOMEPLACE, OR SOMEONE, ELSE.
WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT?
A LAKE.
IT'S NOT THERE YET.
OH.
THE LITTLE PEOPLE BRING WATER FROM THE RIVER.
THEY POUR IT WHERE SKIPPY SAYS MY LAKE WILL BE.
THEN IT GOES SOMEWHERE.
INTO THE SAND?
I DON'T KNOW WHERE IT GOES.
I THINK IT IS THE-OL-O-GY WATER.
I'M SORRY --
DID YOU JUST SAY "THEOLOGY"?
THE-OL-O-GY.
LIKE THE LITTLE PEOPLE WHO FALL DOWN AND DON'T GET UP.
AND THE FISH THAT DON'T SPLASH.
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
IBBIT.
IBBIT --
I'M VERY SORRY ABOUT THIS --

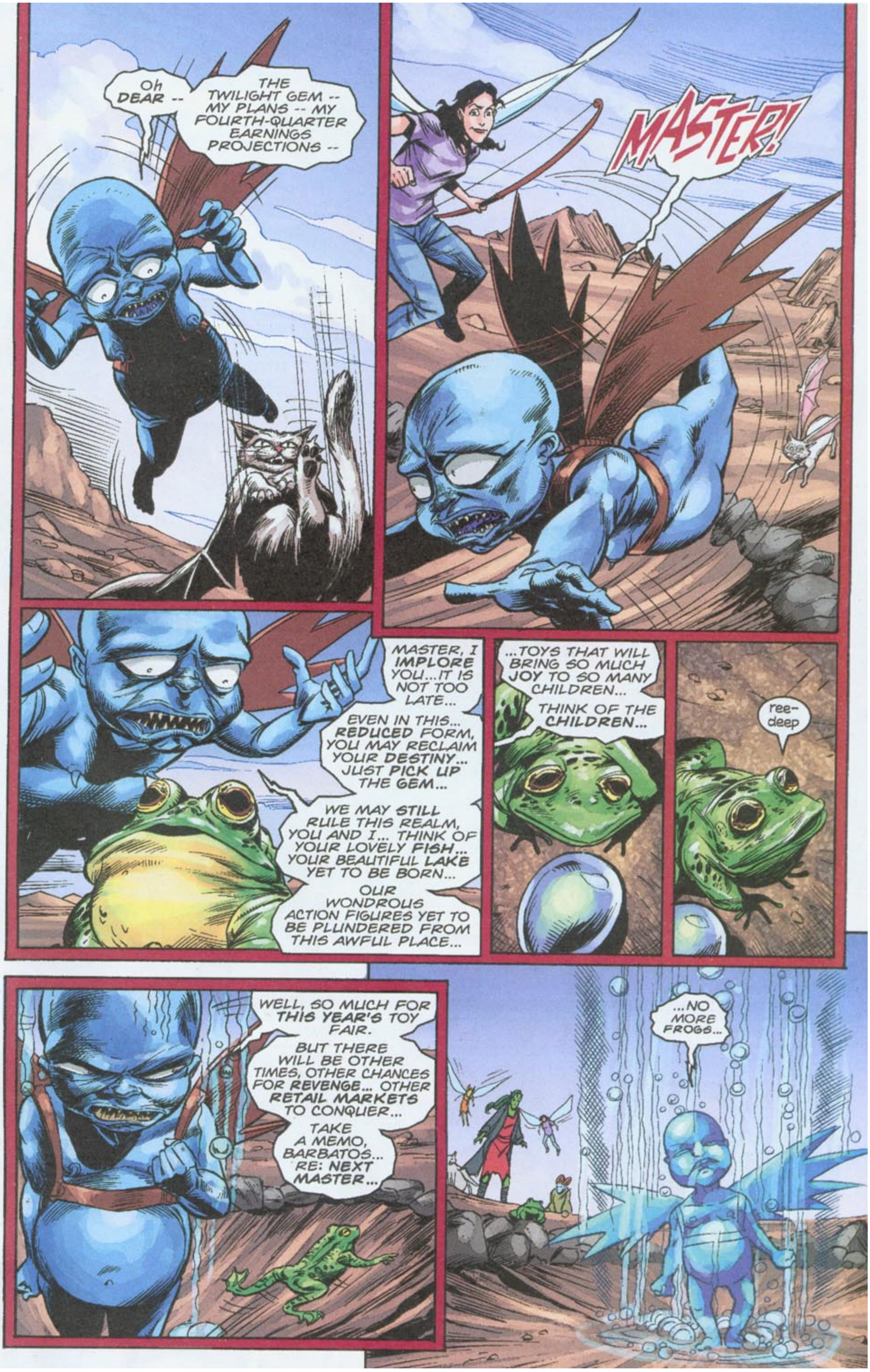

FWIP FWIP FWIP
YAARGH--
AUBERON!
OH, STOP WHIMPERING, YARROW.
AS YOUR ANCESTOR, I MUST SAY IT IS EMBARRASSING TO SEE HOW THIN THE WARRIOR BLOOD OF OUR RACE HAS GROWN.
BESIDES -- HE'S NOT DEAD YET.
WHAT FUN WOULD THAT BE?
IT WOULD BE FAR MORE ENTERTAINING -- DON'T YOU THINK? -- IF YOU WERE TO EXECUTE HIM, YARROW...
AFTER MY CORONATION TO DEMONSTRATE YOUR LOYALTY--AND YOUR DESIRE TO KEEP BREATHING -- TO MY ROYAL SELF?
HOWEVER --
HA!
DO YOU HAVE ANY LAST WORDS? BEFORE WE PUT YOU OUT OF YOUR ARISTOCRATIC MISERY, NOW?
YOU, TITANIA, HAVE SUFFERED QUITE ENOUGH, I BELIEVE.

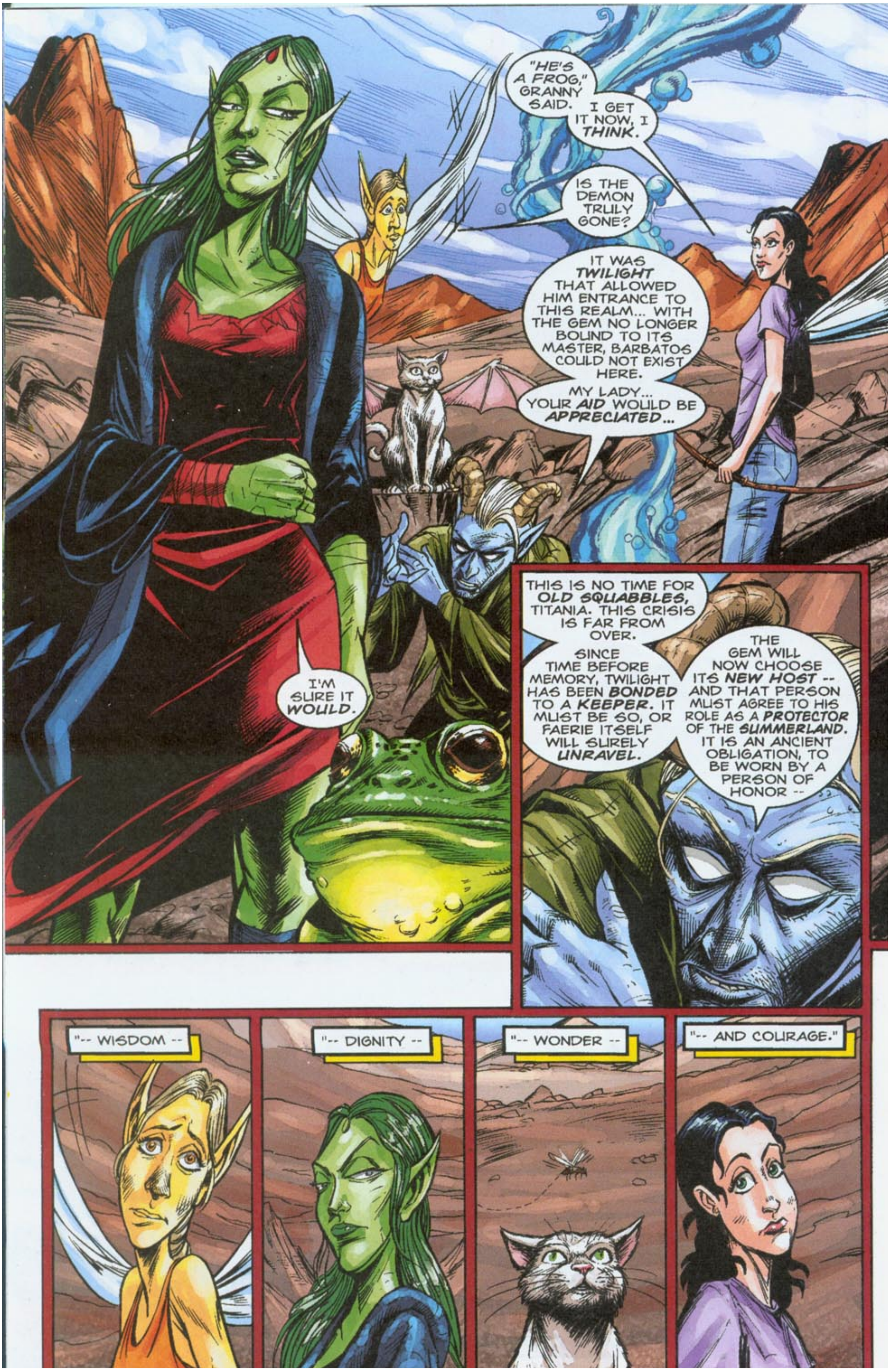

I HAVE *MUCH* TO SAY TO YOU, USURPER --
AND THESE *SECRETS* I SHALL *GLADLY* WHISPER TO YOUR CHARRED AND SMOKING *BONES.*
I SHOWED YOU MERCY A *THOUSAND* YEARS AGO, WHEN YOU *FIRST* ROUSED THE FLITLINGS TO *REBELLION* --
BUT THIS DAY, I SHALL SEE YOU *DEAD,* OR DIE MYSELF.
YOU?
HOW *DARE* YOU CLAIM YOU SHOWED ME *MERCY?*
FORCING MY SPIRIT INTO THIS, THIS... OVERBLOWN, EARTHBOUND *MOUNTAIN* OF FLESH? TAKING AWAY MY WINGS?
OH MY GOD. *BRIAR* WAS A *FLITLING?*
AND WHY NOT? THE PUNISHMENT SEEMED A FAIR ONE.
IS THIS "*CARCASS*" NOT THE SHAPE *YOU* TOOK, TO SEDUCE MY *HUSBAND* FROM MY SIDE?
SO...
YOU GUESSED.
NAY, MY LORD --
I *KNEW.*

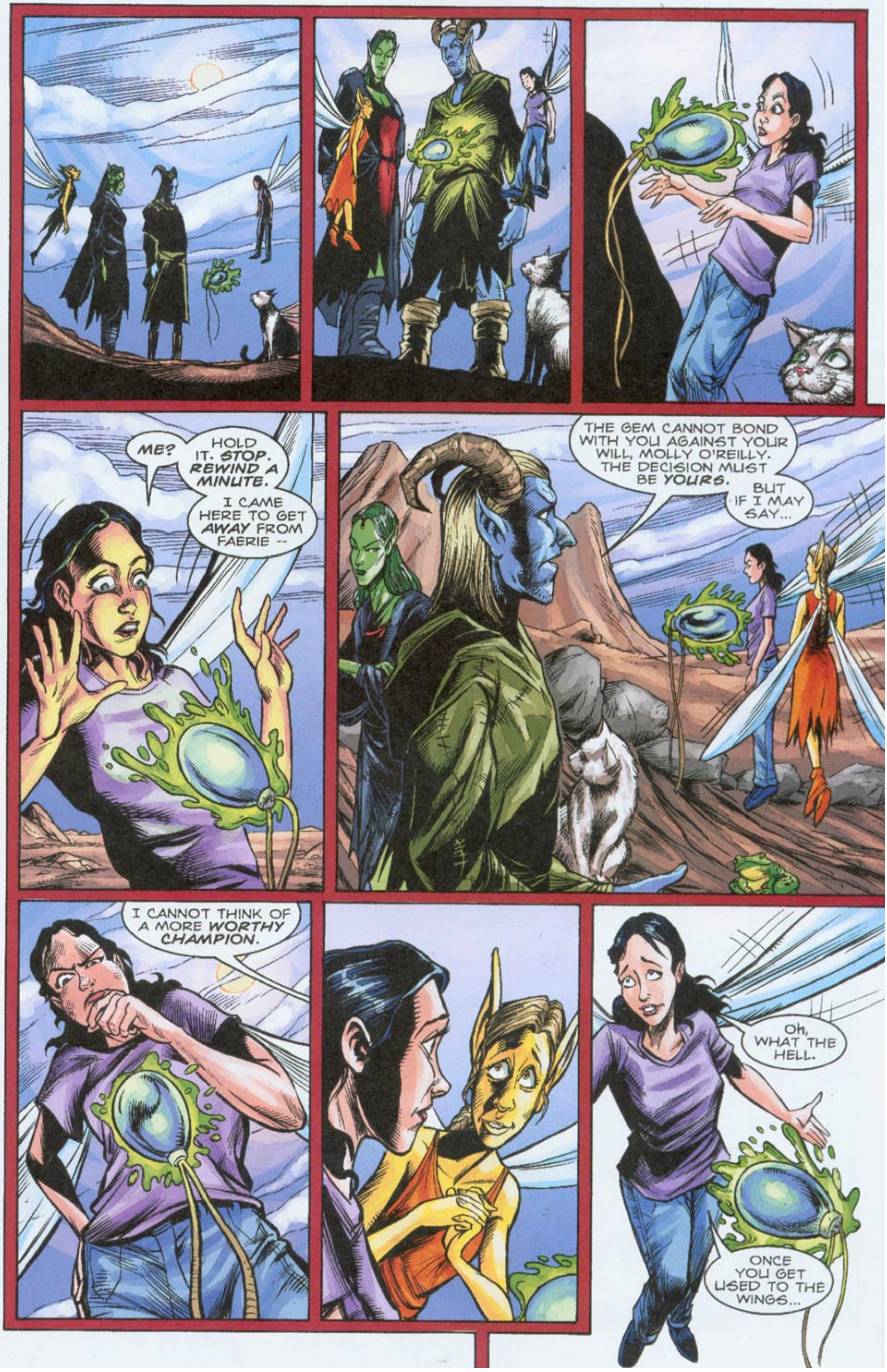

JUST AS I KNOW THAT THIS *USURPER'S BODY* IS *MORTAL*...
BORN OF THE DUST OF EARTH... AND RETURNED, NOW, TO THAT DUST *FOR ALL TIME*.
WOW. I WASN'T EXACTLY PRESIDENT OF BRIAR'S *FAN CLUB*, BUT *THIS* --
THERE WAS NO OPTION, CHILD.
YOU HEARD MY WORDS ABOUT BRIAR'S PAST. PUT SIMPLY, SHE WAS A *BODY THIEF*.
AND JUST AS SHE HAD USURPED THE FORMS OF MORTALS IN TIMES PAST...
...SHE PLANNED TO DO SO AGAIN. TO *YOU*.
YOUR SOUL WAS PROMISED TO THE DEMON, WHILE BRIAR PLANNED TO LIVE IN YOUR BODY.
I KNOW WHAT YOU THINK OF ME, MOLLY O'REILLY...
BUT THERE ARE FAR WORSE THAN ME IN THIS WORLD.
ANOTHER LITTLE PERSON FALLS DOWN.
IS THIS IT? IS THIS *DEATH?*
SIGH
IBBIT, OLD CHUM... IT'S *COMPLICATED*.
THERE ARE LOTS OF *KINDS* OF *DEATH*...

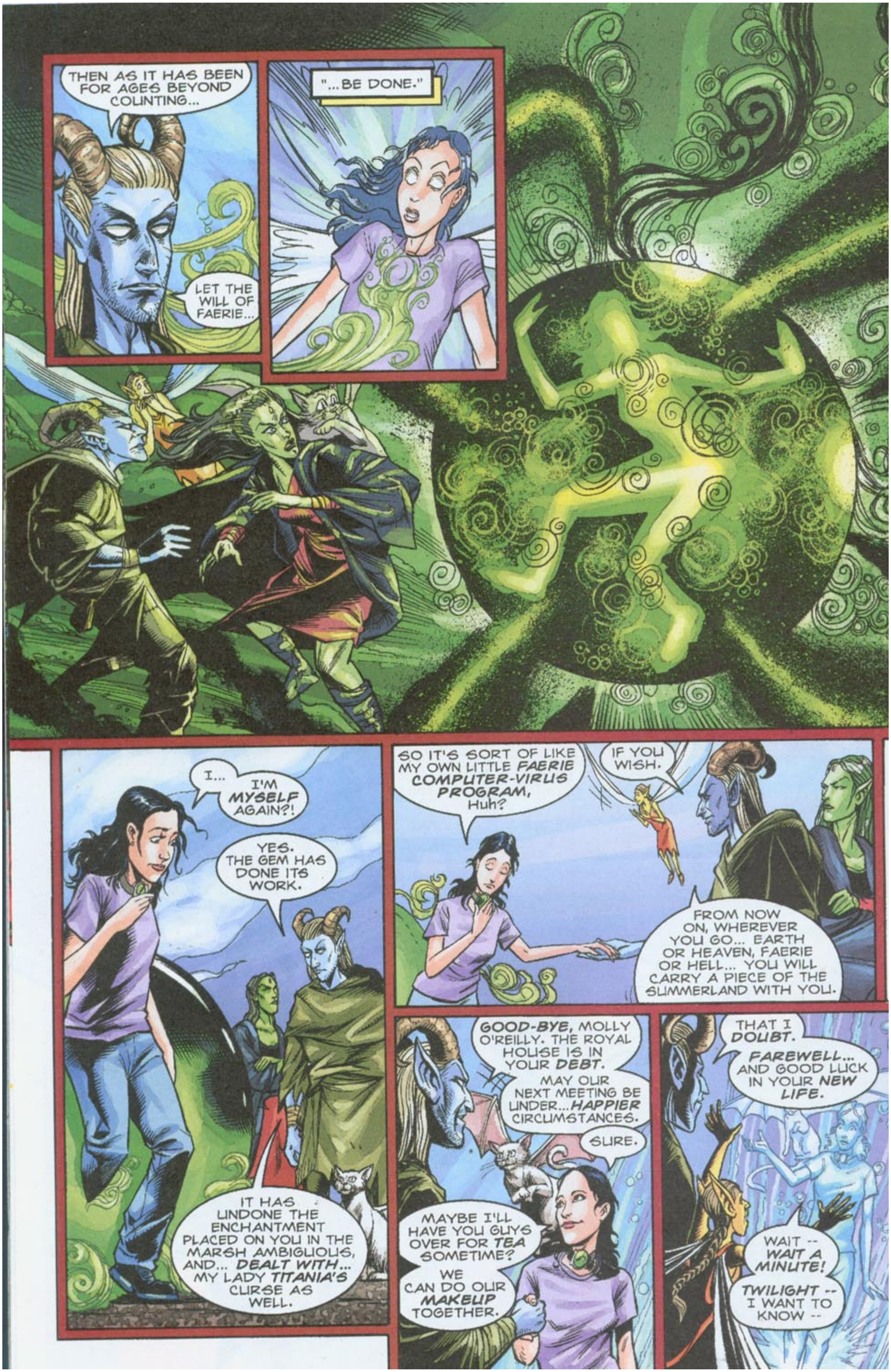

FOR INSTANCE, IN MY LANGUAGE, THERE ARE -- er -- TWELVE DIFFERENT WORDS FOR DEATH...
"DEATHO" MEANS DEATH BY HANGING... WHILE, uh, "DEATHICUS" REFERS TO BEING TRAMPLED BY GLADIATORS...
THAT'S IT... DON'T LOOK AT THE BOW AND ARROW...
AS A PHILOSOPHER, MY DEAR --
YOU LEAVE MUCH TO BE DESIRED.
NOW BE SO GOOD AS TO FLIT AWAY FROM MY MASTER IBBIT...OR, AS THEY SAY IN YOUR FINER HUMOR MAGAZINES...
I'LL KILL THIS CAT.
GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, PRINCESS.
THIS STORY WILL HAVE A DIFFERENT ENDING THAN THE LAST, DON'T YOU THINK?
SORRY, FILTHY.

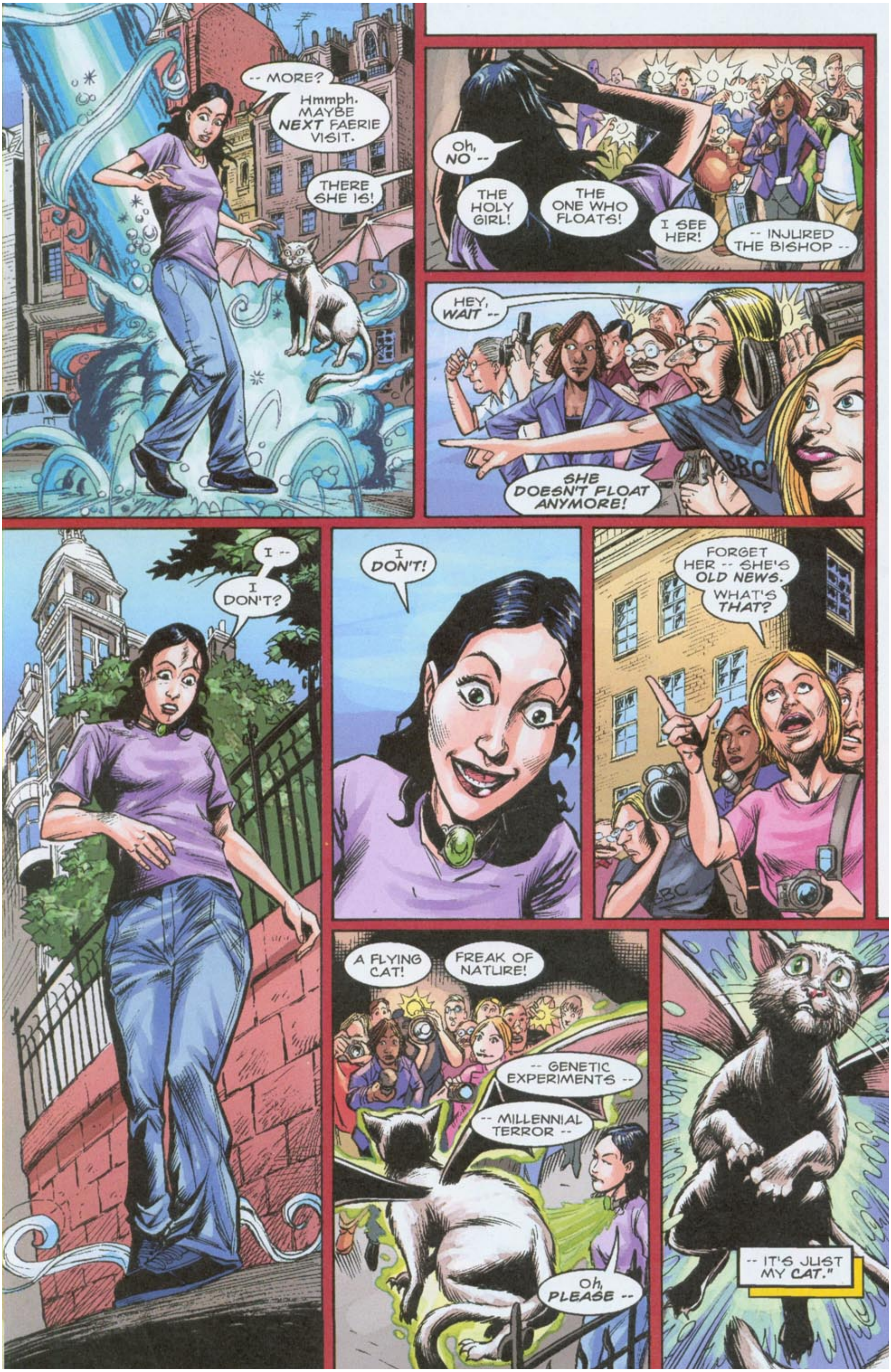

THWIP
THWIP
THWIP
KTCH
PPP
KTCH
T INK
THE WATER...
NOT ENOUGH TO RESTORE A HUMAN...
BUT MAYBE ENOUGH --
"-- FOR A FROG."
ree-deep

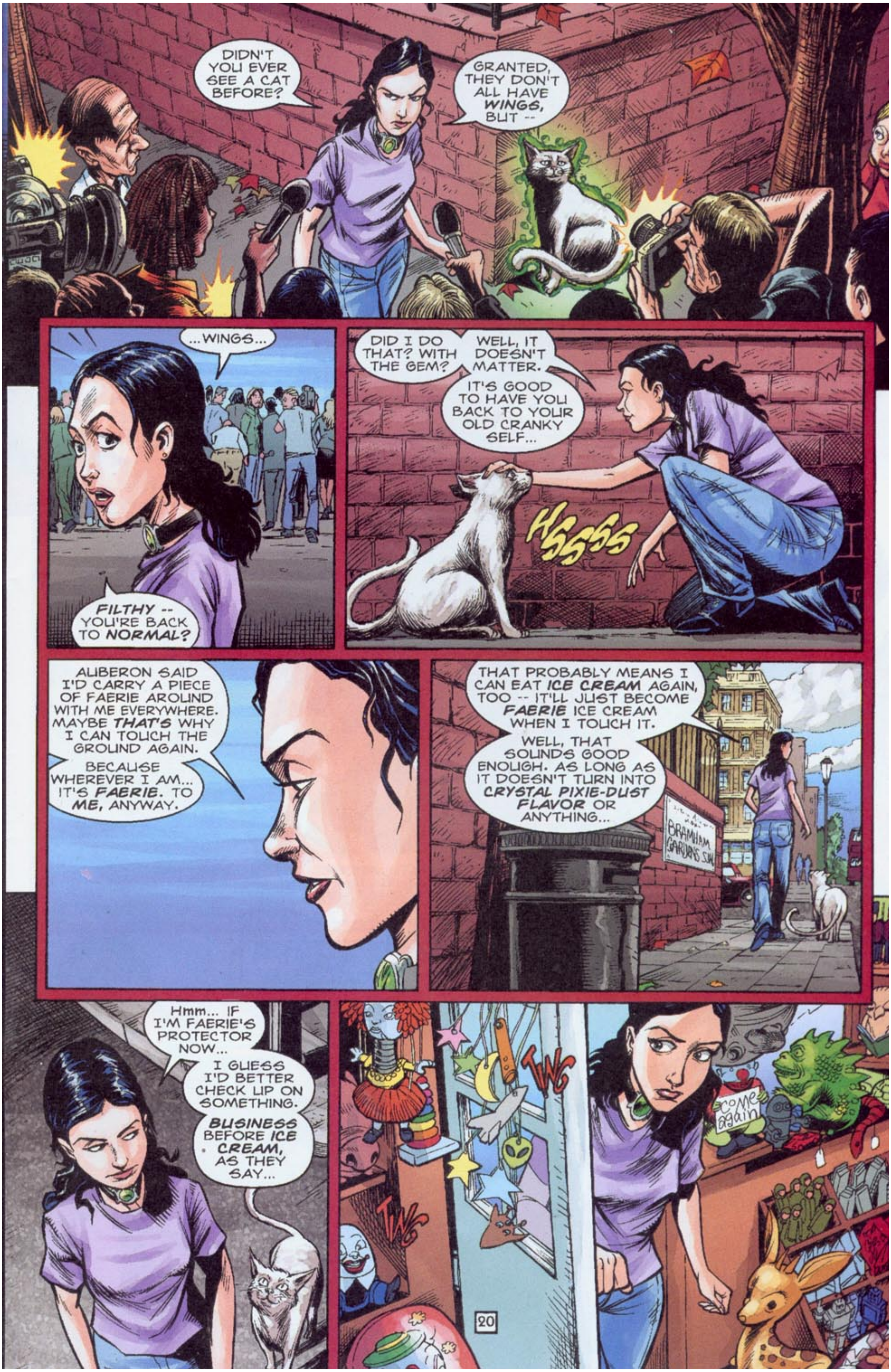

Oh DEAR --
THE TWILIGHT GEM -- MY PLANS -- MY FOURTH-QUARTER EARNINGS PROJECTIONS --
MASTER!
MASTER, I IMPLORE YOU...IT IS NOT TOO LATE...
EVEN IN THIS... REDUCED FORM, YOU MAY RECLAIM YOUR DESTINY... JUST PICK UP THE GEM...
WE MAY STILL RULE THIS REALM, YOU AND I... THINK OF YOUR LOVELY FISH... YOUR BEAUTIFUL LAKE YET TO BE BORN...
OUR WONDROUS ACTION FIGURES YET TO BE PLUNDERED FROM THIS AWFUL PLACE...
...TOYS THAT WILL BRING SO MUCH JOY TO SO MANY CHILDREN...
THINK OF THE CHILDREN...
ree-deep
WELL, SO MUCH FOR THIS YEAR'S TOY FAIR.
BUT THERE WILL BE OTHER TIMES, OTHER CHANCES FOR REVENGE... OTHER RETAIL MARKETS TO CONQUER...
TAKE A MEMO, BARBATOS... RE: NEXT MASTER...
...NO MORE FROGS...

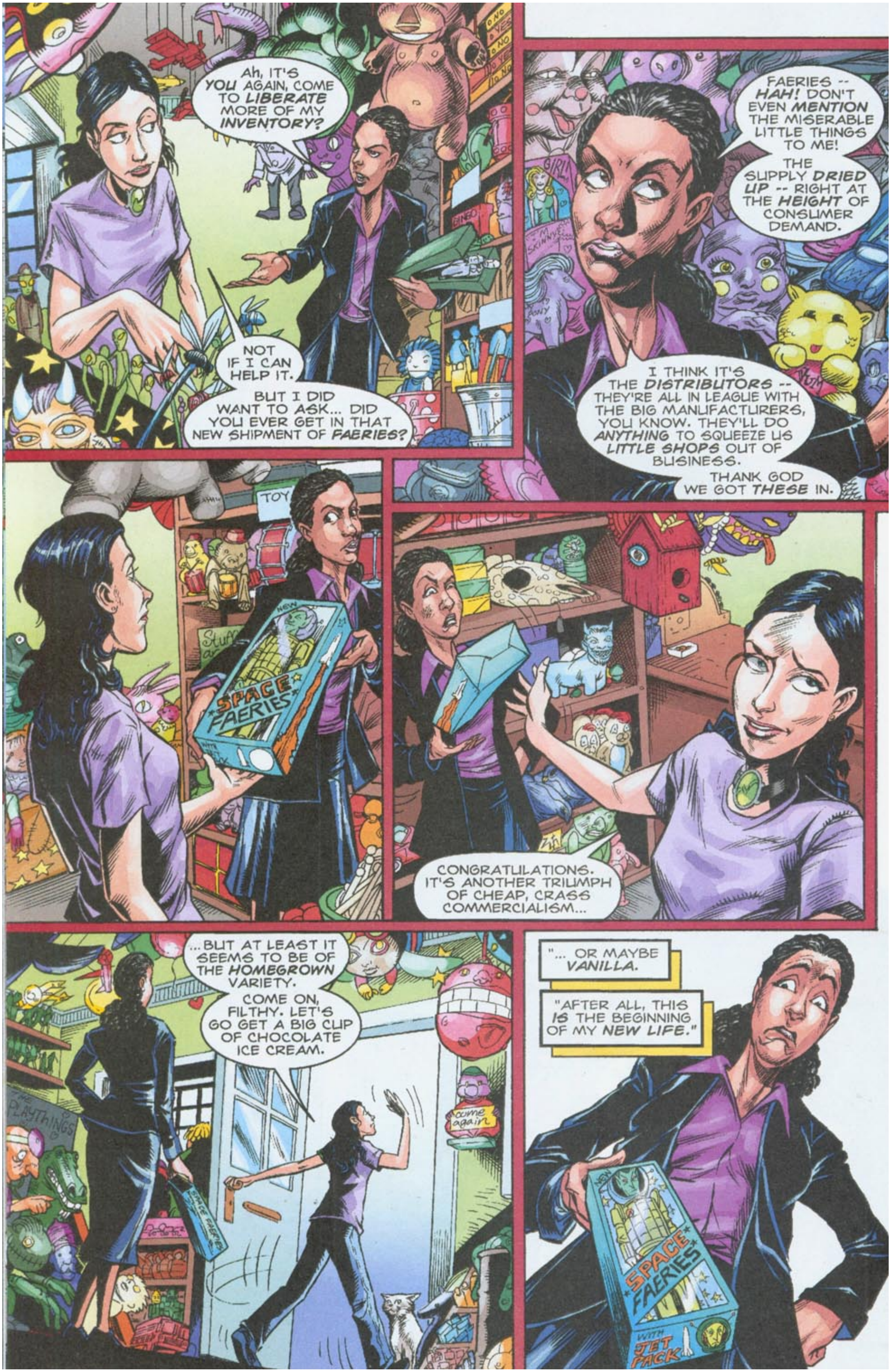

"HE'S A FROG," GRANNY SAID. I GET IT NOW, I THINK.
IS THE DEMON TRULY GONE?
IT WAS TWILIGHT THAT ALLOWED HIM ENTRANCE TO THIS REALM... WITH THE GEM NO LONGER BOUND TO ITS MASTER, BARBATOS COULD NOT EXIST HERE.
MY LADY... YOUR AID WOULD BE APPRECIATED...
I'M SURE IT WOULD.
THIS IS NO TIME FOR OLD SQUABBLES, TITANIA. THIS CRISIS IS FAR FROM OVER.
SINCE TIME BEFORE MEMORY, TWILIGHT HAS BEEN BONDED TO A KEEPER. IT MUST BE SO, OR FAERIE ITSELF WILL SURELY UNRAVEL.
THE GEM WILL NOW CHOOSE ITS NEW HOST -- AND THAT PERSON MUST AGREE TO HIS ROLE AS A PROTECTOR OF THE SUMMERLAND. IT IS AN ANCIENT OBLIGATION, TO BE WORN BY A PERSON OF HONOR --
"-- WISDOM --
"-- DIGNITY --
"-- WONDER --
"-- AND COURAGE."

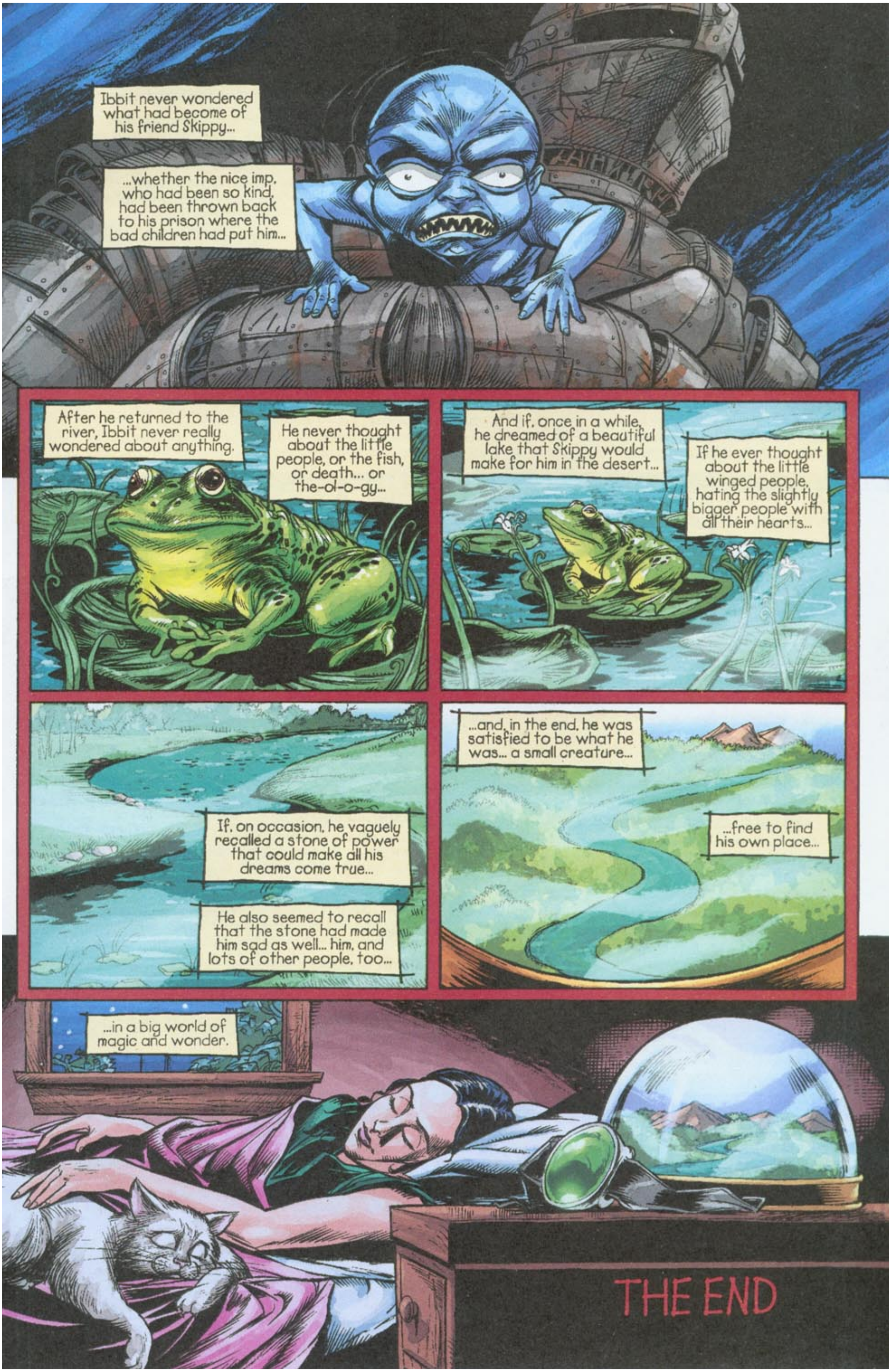

ME?
HOLD IT. STOP. REWIND A MINUTE.
I CAME HERE TO GET AWAY FROM FAERIE --
THE GEM CANNOT BOND WITH YOU AGAINST YOUR WILL, MOLLY O'REILLY. THE DECISION MUST BE YOURS.
BUT IF I MAY SAY...
I CANNOT THINK OF A MORE WORTHY CHAMPION.
Oh, WHAT THE HELL.
ONCE YOU GET USED TO THE WINGS...


THEN AS IT HAS BEEN FOR AGES BEYOND COUNTING...
LET THE WILL OF FAERIE...
"...BE DONE."
I...
I'M **MYSELF** AGAIN?!
YES. THE GEM HAS DONE ITS WORK.
IT HAS UNDONE THE ENCHANTMENT PLACED ON YOU IN THE MARSH AMBIGUOUS, AND... **DEALT WITH...** MY LADY **TITANIA'S** CURSE AS WELL.
SO IT'S SORT OF LIKE MY OWN LITTLE **FAERIE COMPUTER-VIRUS PROGRAM,** Huh?
IF YOU WISH.
FROM NOW ON, WHEREVER YOU GO... EARTH OR HEAVEN, FAERIE OR HELL... YOU WILL CARRY A PIECE OF THE SUMMERLAND WITH YOU.
GOOD-BYE, MOLLY O'REILLY. THE ROYAL HOUSE IS IN YOUR **DEBT.**
MAY OUR NEXT MEETING BE UNDER... **HAPPIER** CIRCUMSTANCES.
SURE.
MAYBE I'LL HAVE YOU GUYS OVER FOR **TEA** SOMETIME?
WE CAN DO OUR **MAKEUP** TOGETHER.
THAT I **DOUBT.**
FAREWELL... AND GOOD LUCK IN YOUR **NEW LIFE.**
WAIT -- **WAIT A MINUTE!**
TWILIGHT -- I WANT TO KNOW --


-- MORE?
Hmmph. MAYBE NEXT FAERIE VISIT.
THERE SHE IS!
Oh, NO --
THE HOLY GIRL!
THE ONE WHO FLOATS!
I SEE HER!
-- INJURED THE BISHOP --
HEY, WAIT --
BBC
SHE DOESN'T FLOAT ANYMORE!
I --
I DON'T?
I DON'T!
FORGET HER -- SHE'S OLD NEWS.
WHAT'S THAT?
BBC
A FLYING CAT!
FREAK OF NATURE!
-- GENETIC EXPERIMENTS --
-- MILLENNIAL TERROR --
Oh, PLEASE --
-- IT'S JUST MY CAT."


DIDN'T YOU EVER SEE A CAT BEFORE?
GRANTED, THEY DON'T ALL HAVE **WINGS,** BUT --
...WINGS...
FILTHY -- YOU'RE BACK TO **NORMAL?**
DID I DO THAT? WITH THE GEM?
WELL, IT DOESN'T MATTER.
IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK TO YOUR OLD CRANKY SELF...
HSSSS
AUBERON SAID I'D CARRY A PIECE OF FAERIE AROUND WITH ME EVERYWHERE. MAYBE **THAT'S** WHY I CAN TOUCH THE GROUND AGAIN.
BECAUSE WHEREVER I AM... IT'S **FAERIE.** TO **ME,** ANYWAY.
THAT PROBABLY MEANS I CAN EAT **ICE CREAM** AGAIN, TOO -- IT'LL JUST BECOME **FAERIE** ICE CREAM WHEN I TOUCH IT.
WELL, THAT SOUNDS GOOD ENOUGH. AS LONG AS IT DOESN'T TURN INTO **CRYSTAL PIXIE-DUST FLAVOR** OR ANYTHING...
BRAMHAM GARDENS SW
Hmm... IF I'M FAERIE'S PROTECTOR NOW...
I GUESS I'D BETTER CHECK UP ON SOMETHING.
BUSINESS BEFORE **ICE CREAM,** AS THEY SAY...
TWNG
TWNG
come again


Ah, IT'S *YOU* AGAIN, COME TO *LIBERATE* MORE OF MY *INVENTORY?*
NOT IF I CAN HELP IT.
BUT I DID WANT TO ASK... DID YOU EVER GET IN THAT NEW SHIPMENT OF *FAERIES?*
FAERIES -- *HAH!* DON'T EVEN *MENTION* THE MISERABLE LITTLE THINGS TO ME!
THE SUPPLY *DRIED UP* -- RIGHT AT THE *HEIGHT* OF CONSUMER DEMAND.
I THINK IT'S THE *DISTRIBUTORS* -- THEY'RE ALL IN LEAGUE WITH THE BIG MANUFACTURERS, YOU KNOW. THEY'LL DO *ANYTHING* TO SQUEEZE US *LITTLE SHOPS* OUT OF BUSINESS.
THANK GOD WE GOT *THESE* IN.
TOY
NEW
SPACE FAERIES
CONGRATULATIONS. IT'S ANOTHER TRIUMPH OF CHEAP, CRASS COMMERCIALISM...
...BUT AT LEAST IT SEEMS TO BE OF THE *HOMEGROWN* VARIETY.
COME ON, FILTHY. LET'S GO GET A BIG CUP OF CHOCOLATE ICE CREAM.
PLAYTHINGS
come again
"... OR MAYBE *VANILLA.*
"AFTER ALL, THIS *IS* THE BEGINNING OF MY *NEW LIFE.*"
SPACE FAERIES
WITH JET PACK


Ibbit never wondered what had become of his friend Skippy...
...whether the nice imp, who had been so kind, had been thrown back to his prison where the bad children had put him...
After he returned to the river, Ibbit never really wondered about anything.
He never thought about the little people, or the fish, or death... or the-ol-o-gy...
And if, once in a while, he dreamed of a beautiful lake that Skippy would make for him in the desert...
If he ever thought about the little winged people, hating the slightly bigger people with all their hearts...
If, on occasion, he vaguely recalled a stone of power that could make all his dreams come true...
He also seemed to recall that the stone had made him sad as well... him, and lots of other people, too...
...and, in the end, he was satisfied to be what he was... a small creature...
...free to find his own place...
...in a big world of magic and wonder.
THE END